

THE ARGOSY.

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EDINA.

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CHAPTER I.

HEARD AT MIDNIGHT.

THE village was called Trennach ; and the scene about it was bleak and bare and dreary enough, though situated in the grand old county of Cornwall. For, mines lay around, with all the signs and features of miners' work : yawning pit mouths, leading down to their rich beds of minerals—some of the mines in all the bustle of full operation, some worked out and abandoned. Again, surrounding these, might be seen miners' huts, and other dwelling-places. The little village of Trennach skirted this tract of labour : for, while the mining district extended for some miles on the one side the hamlet ; on the other side, half an hour's gentle walking brought you to a different-looking land altogether—to trees, and pasture land, and luxuriant vegetation.

The village street consisted chiefly of shops. Very humble shops, most of them : but the miners and the other inhabitants, being out of reach of better, found them good enough. Most of the shops dealt in mixed articles, and might be called general shops rather than special ones. The linendraper, for instance, added brushes and brooms to his cottons and stuffs ; the grocer sold saucepans and gridirons ; the baker did a thriving trade in home-made pickles. On a dark night, the most cheery-looking shop was the druggist's : the four globes, red, green, blue, and amber, displayed in its windows, sending forth their colours on the faces of the passers-by, and tingeing the puddles in the road. This shop had also added another branch of trade to its legitimate one—that of general literature : for the one doctor of the place dispensed his own medicines, and the sale of the chemist's drugs was not great. The shop boasted of a small circulating library ; or

as it was called there, a book-lending club: the miners and the miners' wives were, like their betters, fond of sensational fiction. The books consisted entirely of cheap volumes, sold at a shilling or two shillings each; some indeed at sixpence. The proprietor of this shop, Edmund Float, chemist and druggist, was almost a chronic invalid, and would often be laid up for a week together. The doctor told him that if he would give less of his time to that noted hostelry, the Golden Shaft, he might escape these attacks of sickness. During their continuance the business of the shop, both as to its drugs and books, was transacted by a young man, a native of Falmouth; one Blase Pellet, who had served his apprenticeship in it and remained on as assistant.

The doctor's name was Raynor. He wrote himself Hugh Raynor, M.D., being a member of the Royal College of Physicians. That he, a man of fair ability in his profession and a gentleman as well, should be content to live in this obscure place, exercising the drudgery of a general practitioner and apothecary, may seem a matter of marvel—but his history shall be given further on. His house stood in the middle of the village, somewhat back from the street-line: a low, square, detached house, with a bow window on either side its entrance, and three windows above. On the door, which always stood open in the day-time, was a brass plate announcing his name, "Dr. Raynor." The bow window to its left was shaded within by a brown wire blind, bearing the word "Surgery" in large white letters. The blind reached about half-way up the window, and Dr. Raynor's white head, or the young head of his handsome nephew, might on occasion be seen over it by the foot passengers, or by Mr. Blase Pellet over the way. For the Doctor's house and the druggist's shop faced each other; and Mr. Pellet, being of an inquisitive disposition, seemed never to tire of peeping and peering into his neighbours' doings generally, and especially into any that might take place at Dr. Raynor's. At either end of this rather straggling street were seated respectively the parish church and the Wesleyan meeting-house. But most of the miners followed their fathers' faith—that of Wesleyan methodist.

It was Monday morning, and a cold bright day in March. The wind came sweeping down the wide street; the dust whirled in the air; but overhead the sun was shining. Dr. Raynor stood by the fire in his surgery—the fire-place being opposite the door—looking over his day-book, in which a summary of the cases under present treatment was entered. He was dressed in black. A tall, grand-looking, elderly man, with a pale, placid face, very quiet in manner, and carefully-trimmed thin white whiskers shading his cheeks. It was eight o'clock, and he had just come into the surgery: his nephew had been in it half an hour. Never was there a more active man in his work than Dr. Raynor had been; up early, and to bed late; but latterly his energy had strangely failed him.

"Has any message come in this morning from Pollock's wife, Frank?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Then I suppose she's better," remarked the Doctor, closing the book as he spoke, and moving towards the window.

A square table stood at the end of the room, facing the window. Behind it was Frank Raynor, making up mixtures, the ingredients for which he took from some of the various bottles that were ranged in rows upon the shelves behind him. He was a slender, gentlemanly young fellow of four-and-twenty, rather above the middle height, and wore this morning a suit of grey clothes. The thought that passed through a stranger's mind on first seeing Frank Raynor was, how good-looking he is! It was not, however, so much in physical beauty that the good looks consisted, as in the bright expression pervading his well-featured face, and the sunny gladness in his laughing blue eyes. The face lacked one thing—firmness. In the delicate mouth, very sweet and pleasant in form though it was, might be traced his want of stability. He could not say No to a petition, let it be what it might: he might be swayed as easily as the wind. Most lovable was Frank Raynor; but he would be almost sure to be his own enemy as he went through life. You could not help liking him; everybody did that—with the exception of Mr. Blase Pellet across the road. Frank's hair was of a golden brown, curling slightly, and worn rather long. His face, like his uncle's, was close-shaved, save for the whiskers, which were of the same colour as the hair.

"What a number of men are standing about!" exclaimed Dr. Raynor, looking over the blind. "More even than usual on a Monday morning. One might think none of them were at work."

"None of them are," replied Frank. "As I hear."

"No! what's that for?"

Frank's lips parted with a smile. An exceedingly amused look sat in his laughing blue eyes as he answered.

"Through some superstition, I fancy, Uncle Hugh. They say the Seven Whistlers were heard in the night."

Dr. Raynor turned quickly to face his nephew. "The Seven Whistlers!" he repeated. "Why, who says that?"

"Ross told me. He came in for some laudanum for his neuralgia. As there is to be no work done to-day, the overseer thought he might as well lie up and doctor himself. A rare passion he is in."

"Can't he get the men to work?"

"Not one of them. Threats and promises alike fail. There's safe to be an accident if they go down to-day, say the men; and they won't risk it. Bell had better not come in Ross's way while his present temper lasts," added Frank, with a broader smile, as he began to screw a cork into a bottle. "I think Ross would knock him down."

"Why Bell in particular?"

"Because it is Bell who professes to have heard the Whistlers."

"And none of the others?" cried the Doctor.

"Well, I fancy not. Uncle Hugh, what *is* the superstition?—what does it mean? I don't understand: and Ross, when I asked him, went into an explosive fit, instead of answering me. Something ridiculous?"

Dr. Raynor briefly explained. This superstition of the Seven Whistlers arose from certain sounds heard in the air. They were supposed by the miners, when heard—which was very rare indeed, in this neighbourhood—to bode ill luck. Accident, death, all kinds of calamity, in fact, might be looked for, according to the popular superstition, by those who had the misfortune to hear the sounds.

Frank Raynor listened to the Doctor's short explanation, a glow of amusement on his face. It sounded to him like a bit of absurd fun.

"*You* don't believe in any such nonsense, surely, Uncle Hugh!"

Dr. Raynor had returned to the fire, and was gazing straight out before him; some speculation, or perhaps remembrance, or it may be doubt, in his grey eyes.

"All my experience in regard to the Seven Whistlers is this, Frank—and you may make the most of it. Many years ago, when I was staying amid the collieries in North Warwickshire, there arose one morning a commotion. The men did not want to go down the pits that day, alleging as a reason that the Seven Whistlers had passed over the place during the night, and had been heard by many of them. I naturally inquired what the Seven Whistlers might mean, never having heard tell of them, and received in reply the same explanation I have now given you. But workmen were not quite so independent in those days, Frank, as they are in these; and the men were forced to go down the pits as usual."

"And what came of it?" asked Frank.

"Of the going down? This. An accident took place in the pit that same morning—through fire-damp, I think; and many of them never came up alive."

"How dreadful! But that could not have been the fault of the Seven Whistlers?" debated Frank.

"My second and only other experience was here at Trennach," continued Dr. Raynor, passing over Frank's comment. "About six years ago some of the miners professed to have heard these sounds. That same day, as they were descending one of the shafts after dinner, an accident occurred to the machinery ——"

"And did damage?" interrupted Frank with growing interest.

"Yes. Three of the men were precipitated to the bottom of the mine, and killed, and several others were injured more or less, some badly. I attended them. You ask me if I put faith in the superstition, Frank. No: I do not. But these experiences that I have told you are facts."

A pause. Frank was recontinuing his work.

"Are the sounds all fancy, Uncle Hugh?"

"Oh no. The sounds are real."

"What do they proceed from? What causes them?"

"It is said that they proceed from certain night-birds," replied Dr. Raynor. "These flocks of birds, in their nocturnal passage across the country, make plaintive, wailing sounds: and when the sounds are heard, they are superstitiously supposed to predict evil to the hearers. Ignorant men are credulous. That is all about it, Frank."

"Did you ever hear the sounds yourself, Uncle Hugh?"

"Never. This is only the third occasion that I have been in any place at the time they have been heard—or said to have been heard—and I have not myself been one of the hearers.—There's Bell!" added Dr. Raynor, perceiving a man leave the chemist's opposite and cross the street in the direction of his house: for the wire blind did not obstruct the view outwards, though it did that, inwards. "He seems to be coming here."

"And Float the miner's following him," observed Frank.

Two men came in through the Doctor's open front door, and thence to the surgery. The one was a little, middle-aged man who carried a stout stick in his hand, and walked somewhat lame; his countenance was not very pleasing at the best of times, and just now it had a grey tinge on it that was rather remarkable. This was Josiah Bell. The one who followed him in was a tall, burly man with a pleasant face; his cheeks were as red as a farm labourer's, his voice was soft, and his manner meek and retiring. The little man's voice was, on the contrary, loud and self-asserting. Bell was given to quarrel with everyone who would quarrel with him; hardly a day passed but he, to use his own words, "had it out" with somebody. Andrew Float had never quarrelled in his life; not even with his quarrelsome friend Bell; but was one of the most peaceable and easy-natured of men. Though only a common miner, he was brother to the chemist, and also brother to John Float, landlord of the Golden Shaft. The three brothers were usually distinguished in the place as Float the druggist, Float the miner, and Float the publican.

"I've brought Float over to ask you just to look at this arm of his, Doctor," began Bell. "It strikes me his brother is not doing what's right for it."

There was a refinement in the man's accent, a readiness of speech, an independence of tone, not at all in keeping with what might be expected from one of a gang of miners. The fact was, Josiah Bell had originally held a better position. He had begun life as a clerk in the office of some large colliery works in Staffordshire; but, partly owing to unsteady habits, partly to an accident which had for many months laid him low and lamed him for life, he had sunk down in the world to be what he now was—a labourer in a Cornish mine.

"What, won't the burn heal?" observed Dr. Raynor. "Let me see it, Float."

"If ye'd please to be so good, sir," replied the big man, with deprecation, as he took off his coat and prepared to display his arm. It had been badly burned some time before; and it seemed to get worse instead of better, in spite of the doctoring of his brother the chemist, and of Mr. Blase Pellet between whiles.

"I have asked you more than once to let me look to your arm, you know, Float," remarked Mr. Frank Raynor.

"But I didn't like to trouble ye, Master Raynor, ye see. I thought Ned and his salves could do for 't, sir."

"And so you men are not at work to-day, Bell!" began the Doctor, as he examined the arm. "What's this absurd story I hear about the Seven Whistlers?"

Bell's aspect changed at the question. The grey pallor on his face seemed to become greyer. It was a greyness that attracted Dr. Raynor's attention: he had never seen it in the man's face before.

"They passed over Trennach at midnight," said Bell, in low tones, from which every bit of independence had gone out. "I heard them myself."

"And who else heard them?"

"I don't know. Nobody—that I can as yet find out. The men were all indoors, they say, before midnight. The Golden Shaft shuts at eleven on a Sunday night."

"You stayed out later?"

"I came on to Float the druggist's when the public-house shut, and smoked a pipe with him and Pellet. It was in going home that I heard the Whistlers."

"You may have been mistaken—in thinking you heard them."

"No," dissented Bell. "It was right in the middle of the Bare Plain. I was stepping along quietly ——"

"And soberly?" interposed Frank, with a twinkling of the eye, and in a tone that might be taken for either jest or earnest.

"And soberly," asserted Bell, resentfully. "As sober as you are now, Mr. Frank Raynor. I was stepping along quietly, I say, when the church clock began to strike. I stood still to count, not believing it could be twelve—for I didn't seem to have stayed twenty minutes at the druggist's. It was twelve, however, and I was still standing stock till after the sound of the last stroke had died away, wondering how it could be so late, when those other sounds broke out high in the air above me. Seven of them: I counted them as I had counted the clock. The saddest sound of a wailing cry I've ever heard—save once before. It seemed to freeze me up."

"Did you hear more?" asked Dr. Raynor.

"No. And the last two sounds of the seven were so faint, I should not have heard them but that I was listening. The cries had broken

out right above where I was standing : they seemed to go gradually away to a distance."

"I say that you may have been mistaken, Bell," persisted Dr. Raynor. "The sounds you heard may not have been the Whistlers."

Bell shook his head. His manner and voice this morning were more subdued than usual. "I can't be mistaken in *them*. Nobody can be that has once heard them, Dr. Raynor."

"Is it the hearing of them which has turned your face so grey?" questioned Frank, alluding to the peculiar pallor noticed by his uncle ; but which the elder and more experienced man had refrained from remarking upon.

"I didn't know it was grey," rejoined Bell, his resentful tone cropping up again.

"It's as grey as this powder," persisted Frank, holding forth a delectable compound of ashy-hued stuff he was preparing for some patient's palate.

"And so, on the strength of this night adventure of yours, Bell—or rather of your ears—all you men are making holiday to-day!" resumed the Doctor.

But Bell, who seemed not to approve of Frank's personal remarks on his complexion, possibly taking them to be made only in ridicule—though he might have known Frank Raynor better—stood in dudgeon, his back against the counter, and vouchsafed no reply. Andrew Float took up the word in his humble, hesitating fashion.

"There ain't one of us, Dr. Raynor, sir, that would venture down to-day after this. When Bell come up to the mine this morning, where us men was collecting to go down, and said the Seven Whistlers had passed over last night at midnight, it took us all aback. Not one of us would hazard it after that. Ross, he stormed and he raged, but he couldn't force us."

"And the Golden Shaft will get the benefit of you instead!" said the Doctor.

"Our lives is dear to all of us, sir," was the deprecating reply of Float, not attempting to confute the argument.—"And I thank ye kindly, sir; for it feels more comfortable like. They burns be nasty things."

"They are apt to be so when not properly attended to. Your brother should not have let it get into this state."

"Well, you see, Dr. Raynor, sir, some days he have been bad abed, and I didn't trouble him with it then; and young Pellet, he don't seem to know much about they bad places."

"You should have brought it to me. Bell, how is your wife to-day?"

"Pretty much as usual," said surly Bell. "If she's worse, it's through the Seven Whistlers. She don't like to hear tell of 'em."

"Why did you tell her?"

Josiah Bell lifted his cold light eyes in a sort of wonder. "Could I keep such a thing as that to myself, Dr. Raynor? It comes as a warning of evil, and must be guarded against. That is, as far as we can guard against it."

"Has the sickness returned?"

"For the matter of that, she's always feeling sick. I should just give her some good strong doses of mustard-and-water to make her sick in earnest, if it was me, Doctor; and then perhaps the feeling would go off."

"Ah," remarked the Doctor, a faint smile parting his lips, "we are all apt to think we know other people's business best, Bell. Float," added he, as the two men were about to leave, "don't you go in for a bout of drinking to-day. It would do your arm no good."

"Thank ye, sir; I'll take care to be mod'rate," replied Float, backing out."

"The Golden Shaft will have much of his company to-day, in spite of your warning, sir; and of Bell's too," observed Frank as the surgery door closed on the men. "How grey and queer Bell's face looks! Did you notice it, Uncle Hugh?"

"Yes."

"He looks just like a man who has had a shock. The Seven Whistlers gave it him, I suppose. I could not have believed Bell was so silly."

"I hope it is only the shock that has done it," said the Doctor.

"Done what, Uncle Hugh?"

"Turned his face that peculiar colour." And Frank looked up to him, as if scarcely understanding. But Dr. Raynor said no more.

At that moment the door again opened, and a young lady glanced in. Seeing no stranger present, she came forward.

"Papa! do you know how late it is getting? Breakfast has been waiting ever so long."

The voice was very sweet and gentle: a *patient* kind of voice, that somehow imparted the idea that its owner had known sorrow. She was the Doctor's only child: and to call her a *young* lady may be regarded as a figure of speech, for she was past thirty. A calm, sensible, gentle girl she had ever been, of great practical good sense. Her pale face was rather plain than handsome: but it was a face pleasant to look upon, with its expression of sincere earnestness, and its steadfast, truthful dark eyes. Her dark brown hair, smooth and bright, was simply braided in front and platted behind on the well-shaped head. She was of middle height, light and graceful; and she wore this morning a violet merino dress, with embroidered cuffs and collar of her own work. Such was Edina Raynor.

"You may pour out the coffee, my dear," said her father. "We are coming now."

Edina disappeared, and the Doctor followed her. Frank stayed a

minute or two longer to make an end of his physic. He then turned down his coat-cuffs, which had been turned up, pulled his wristbands lower, and also passed out of the surgery. The sun was shining into the passage through the open entrance door; and Frank, as if he would sun himself for an instant in its beams, or else wishing to get a more comprehensive view of the street, and of the miners loitering about it, stepped outside. The men had collected chiefly in groups, and were talking idly, shoulders slouching, hands in pockets; some were smoking. A little to the left, as Frank stood, on the other side the way, was that much-frequented hostelry, the Golden Shaft: it was evidently the great point of attraction to-day.

Mr. Blase Pellet chanced to be standing at his shop door, rubbing his hands on his rather dirty white apron. He was an awkward-looking, undersized, unfortunately-plain man, with very red-brown eyes, and rough reddish hair that stood up in bristles. When he saw Frank, he backed into the shop, went behind the counter, and peeped out at him between two of the glass globes.

"I wonder what he's come out to look at now?" debated Mr. Blase with himself. "*She* can't be in the street! What a proud wretch he looks this morning!—with his sleek curls shining, and that ring upon his finger!"

"Twenty of them, at least, in front of it, ready to go in!" mentally spoke Frank, his eyes fixed on the miners, standing about the Golden Shaft. "And some of them will never come out all day."

A sudden cry arose, close to Frank. Some little child, in a nightcap and coloured pinafore, had overbalanced itself and fallen in the road. Frank went to the rescue.

"Here we go up!" cried he, in his loving, cheery voice, as he raised the little one, gave it a kiss and a halfpenny, and sent it on its way to Mrs. Stone's sweet-stuff mart, rejoicing. That was Frank Raynor all over: he had many faults, no doubt, but he was full of loving-kindness to old and young, rich and poor.

He went in to breakfast. The meal was laid in a small back parlour, behind the best sitting-room, which was on the opposite side of the passage to the surgery, and faced the street. This small back room looked down on a square yard, and thence to the bare open country: to the mines and to the miners' dwelling-places. They lay to the right, as you looked out. To the left stretched out a bare tract of land, called the Bare Plain—perhaps from its dreary aspect—which we shall come to by-and-by.

Edina sat at the breakfast-table, her back to the window; Dr. Raynor was in the seat opposite to her. Frank took his usual place between them, facing the cheerful fire.

"If your coffee's cold, Frank, it is your own fault," said Edina, handing him his cup. "I poured it out as soon as papa came in."

"All right, Edina: it is sure to be warm enough for me," was the answer, as he took it and thanked her. He was the least selfish, the least self-indulgent mortal in the world; the most easily satisfied. Give Frank Raynor the poorest of fare, and he would never have murmured.

"What a pity it is about the men!" exclaimed Edina to Frank: for this report of the Seven Whistlers had become generally known, and the Doctor's maid-servant had imparted the news to Miss Raynor. "They will make it an excuse for two or three days' drinking."

"As a matter of course," replied Frank.

"It seems altogether so ridiculous. I have been saying to papa that I thought Josiah Bell had better sense. He may have taken more than was good for him last night; and fancied he heard the sounds."

"Oh, I think he heard them," said the Doctor. "Bell rarely drinks enough to obscure his faculties. And he is certainly not fanciful."

"But now, Uncle Hugh," put in Frank, "you *cannot* seriously think that there's anything in it!"

"Anything in what?"

"In this superstition. Of course one can readily understand that a flock of birds may fly over a place by night, as well as by day; and that they may emit sounds and cries on the way. But that these cries should forebode evil to those who may hear them, is not to be comprehended, or believed."

Dr. Raynor nodded. He was languidly eating an egg. For some time past, appetite had failed him.

"I say, Uncle Hugh, that you cannot believe in such a farce. The incidents you gave just now were but accidental coincidences."

"Frank," returned the Doctor, in his quiet tone, that latterly had seemed to tell of pain, "I have already said so. But when you shall have lived to my age, experience will have taught you that there are some things in this world that cannot be fathomed. We must be content to leave them. I told you that I did not myself put faith in this popular belief of the miners: but I related to you at the same time my own experiences in regard to it. I don't judge: but I cannot explain."

Frank turned a laughing look on his cousin. "Suppose we go out on the Bare Plain to-night and listen for the Seven Whistlers ourselves; you and I, Edina?"

"A watched pot never boils," said Edina, quaintly, quoting a homely proverb. "The Whistlers would be sure not to come, Frank, if we listened for them."

CHAPTER II.

ROSALINE BELL.

FRANK RAYNOR had been a qualified medical man for some few years : he was skilful, kind, attentive, and possessed in an eminent degree that cheering manner which is so valuable in a general practitioner. Consequently he was much liked by the Doctor's patients, especially by those of the better class, living at a distance ; so that Dr. Raynor had no scruple in frequently making Frank his substitute in the daily visits. Frank alone suspected—and it was only a half suspicion as yet—that his uncle was beginning to feel himself unequal to the exertion of paying them.

It was getting towards midday, and Frank had seen all the sick at present on their hands near home, when he started on his walk to see one or two further off. Calling at home first of all, however, to give Dr. Raynor a report of his visits, and to change his grey coat for a black one. Every inch of a gentleman looked Frank, as he left the house again, turned to the right, and went down the street with long strides. He was followed by the envious eyes of Mr. Blase Pellet : who, in the very midst of weighing out some pounded ginger for a customer, darted round the counter to watch him.

"He is off *there*, for a guinea !" growled Mr. Pellet, as he lost sight of Frank and turned back to the ginger. "What possesses Mother Bell, I wonder, to go and fancy herself ill and in need of a doctor !"

The houses and the church, which stood at that end of Trennach, were soon left behind ; and Frank Raynor was on the large tract of land which was called the Bare Plain. The first break he came to in its monotonous bleakness was a worked-out pit, or mine, on the left hand. This old pit was encompassed about by mounds of earth of different heights, where children would play at hide-and-seek during the daylight ; but not one of them ever approached close to the mouth of the shaft. Not only was it dangerous in itself, being entirely unprotected, and children, as a rule, are given to run into danger rather than to avoid it ; but the place had an evil reputation. Some few years back, a miner had committed suicide there : one Daniel Sandon : had deliberately jumped in to destroy himself. Since then, the miners and their families, who were for the most part very superstitious and very ignorant, held a belief that the man's ghost haunted the interior of the pit—that on a still night, anyone, listening down the shaft, might hear his sighs and groans. This caused it to be shunned : hardly a miner would venture close to it alone after dark. There was nothing to take them near it, for it lay some

little distance away from the broad path that led through the middle of the Plain. The depth of the pit had given rise to its appellation, "The Bottomless Shaft": and poor Daniel Sandon must have died before he reached the end. For anyone falling into it, there could be no hope: escape from death would have been an impossibility.

Frank Raynor passed it without so much as a thought. Continuing his way, he came by-and-by to a cluster of miners' dwellings that lay away on the Plain to the right. Not many: the miners chiefly lived on the other side the village, near the mines. Out of one of the most commodious of these houses, there chanced to come a girl, just as he was approaching it; and they met face to face. It was Rosaline Bell.

Never a more beautiful girl in the world than she. Two-and-twenty years of age now, rather tall, with a light and graceful form, as easy in her movements, as refined in her actions as though she had been born a gentlewoman, with a sweet, low voice and a face of delicate loveliness. Her features were of almost a perfect Grecian type; her delicate complexion was fresh as a summer rose, and her deep violet eyes sparkled through their long dark eyelashes. Eyes that, in spite of their brightness, had an expression of fixed sadness in them: and that sad expression of eye is said, you know, never to exist but where its owner is destined to sorrow. Poor Rosaline! Sorrow was on its way to her quickly, even now. Her dress was of some dark kind of stuff, neatly made and worn; her bonnet was of white straw; the pink bow at her throat rivalled in colour the rose of her cheek.

Far deeper in hue did those cheeks become as she recognized Frank Raynor. With a hasty movement, as if all too conscious of her blushes and what they might imply, she raised her hand to cover them, making pretence to push gently back her dark, beautiful hair. Nature had indeed been prodigal in her gifts to Rosaline Bell. She had been brought up well, had received a fairly good education, and profited by it.

"How do you do, Rosaline?" cried Frank, in his gay voice, stopping before her. "Where are you going?"

She let her lifted hand fall. The rich bloom on her face, the shy, answering glance of her lustrous eyes, were beautiful to behold. Frank Raynor admired beauty wherever he saw it, and he very especially admired that of Rosaline.

"I am going in to find my father; to induce him to come back with me," she said. "My mother is anxious about him: and anxiety is not good for her, you know, Mr. Frank."

"Anxiety is very bad for her," returned Frank. "Is she worse to-day?"

"Not worse, sir; only worried. Father heard the Seven Whistlers last night, and that disturbs her."

Frank Raynor broke into a laugh. "It amuses me beyond every-

thing, Rose—those Whistlers. I never heard of them in all my life until this morning.”

Rosaline smiled in answer—a sad smile. “Father believes in them firmly,” she said; “and mother is anxious because he is. I must go on now, sir, or I shall not get back by dinner-time.”

Taking one of her hands, he waved it towards the village, as if he would speed her onwards, said his gay good-bye, and lifted the latch of the house door. The door opened to the kitchen: a clean and, so to say, rather tasty apartment, with a red-tiled floor on which the fire threw its glow, and a strip of carpet by way of hearth-rug. A mahogany dresser was fixed to the wall on one side, plates and dishes of the old willow pattern were ranged on its shelves; an eight-day clock in its mahogany case ticked beside the fire-place, which faced the door. The window was gay with flowers. Blooming hyacinths in their blue glasses stood on its frame half-way up: on the ledge beneath were red pots containing other plants. It was easy to be seen that this was not the abode of a common miner.

Seated in an arm-chair near the round table, which was covered with a red-and-grey cloth, her feet on the strip of carpet, her back to the window, was Mrs. Bell, who had latterly become an invalid. She was rubbing some dried mint into powder. By this, and the savoury smell, Frank Raynor guessed they were going to have pea-soup for dinner. But all the signs of dinner to be seen were three plates warming on the fender, and an iron pot steaming away by the side of the fire.

“And now, mother, how are you to-day?” asked Frank, in his warm-hearted and genuine tone of sympathy, that so won his patients’ regard.

He drew a chair towards her and sat down as he spoke. The word “mother” came from him naturally. Two years before, just after Frank came to Trennack, he was taken ill with a fever; and Mrs. Bell helped Edina to nurse him through it. He took a great liking to the quaint, well-meaning, and rather superior woman, who was so deft with her fingers, and ready with her tongue; he would often then, partly in jest, call her “mother”; he called her so still.

Mrs. Bell was seven-and-forty now, and very stout; her short grey curls lay flat under her mob cap; her bright complexion must once have been as delicately beautiful as her daughter’s. She put the basin of mint on the table, and smoothed down her clean white apron.

“I’m no great things to-day, Master Frank. Sometimes now, sir, I get to think that I never shall be again.”

“Just as I thought in that fever of mine,” said Frank, purposely making light of her words. “Why, my good woman, by this day twelvemonth you’ll be as strong and well as I am. Only take heart and patience. Yours is a case, you know, that cannot be dealt with in a day: it requires time.”

Into the further conversation we need not enter. It related to her

ailments. Not a word was said by either of them about that disturbing element, the Seven Whistlers : and Frank went out again, wishing her a good appetite for the pea-soup.

Putting his best foot foremost, he sped along, fleet as the wind. The Bare Plain gave place to pasture land, trees, and flowers. A quarter of an hour brought him to the Mount—a moderate-sized mansion, standing in the midst of its own grounds, the residence of the St. Clares. By the sudden death of the late owner, who had not reached the meridian of life, it had fallen most unexpectedly to a distant cousin : a young lieutenant serving with his regiment in India. In his absence, his mother had given up her house at Bath, and taken possession of it ; she and her two daughters. They had come quite strangers to the place about two months ago. Mrs. St. Clare—it should be mentioned that they chose their name to be pronounced according to its full spelling, Saint Clare—had four children. The eldest, Charlotte, was with her husband, Captain Townley, in India ; Lydia was the second ; the lieutenant and present owner of the Mount came next ; and lastly Margaret, who was several years younger than the rest, and indulged accordingly. Mrs. St. Clare was extremely fond of society ; and considered that at this place, the Mount, she was no better than buried alive.

The great entrance gates stood on the opposite side ; Frank Raynor never went round to them, unless he was on horseback : when on foot he entered, as now, by the little postern gate that was nearly hidden by clustering shrubs. A minute's walk through the narrow path between these shrubs, and he was met by Margaret St. Clare : or, as they generally called her at home, Daisy. It very frequently happened that she did meet him : and, in truth, the meetings were becoming rather precious to both of them, very especially so to her. During these two months' residence of the St. Clares at the Mount, Mr. Raynor and Margaret had seen a good deal of each other. Lydia was an invalid—or fancied herself one—and the Raynors had been in attendance from the first, paying a visit about every other day. The Doctor went himself now and then, but it was generally Frank.

And Mrs. St. Clare was quite contented that it should be Frank. In this dead-alive spot, Frank Raynor, with his good looks, his sunny presence, his attractive manners, seemed like a godsend. She chanced to know that he was a gentleman by descent, and had met members of his family before : Major Raynor, and old Mrs. Atkinson of Eagles' Nest. She did not know much about them, and in her proud heart she secretly looked down upon Frank : as she would have looked upon any other general practitioner in the medical profession. But she liked Frank himself, and she greatly liked his society, and asked him to dinner pretty often, *en famille*. The few visitable people who lived within reach did not constitute a large party ; but Mrs. St. Clare got them together occasionally, and made the best of them.

Margaret St. Clare would be nineteen years old to-morrow. A slight-made, light, pretty girl, putting one somehow in mind of a fairy. Her small feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground as she walked, her small arms and hands, her delicate throat and neck, were all perfectly formed. The face was a fair, piquante face, quiet and rather grave when in repose. Her eyes were of that remarkable shade that some people call light hazel and others amber: and in truth they did on occasion look as clear and bright as amber.

She was fond of dress. Mrs. St. Clare's daughters were all fond of it. Margaret's this morning was some fine texture of light blue, that fell in soft folds around her, white lace on the sleeves and round the throat. A thin gold chain, holding a locket, was on her neck. Her hat, its blue ribbons streaming, hung on her arm; her light brown hair was somewhat ruffled by the breeze.

As she came forward to meet Frank, her whole face was lighted up with smiles of pleasure; its blushes were nearly as deep as those that had lighted Rosaline Bell's, not half an hour before.

Frank took both her hands within his in silence. His heart was beating at sight of her: and silence in these brief moments is the best eloquence. Rapidly indeed was he arriving at that blissful state, described by Lord Byron in a word or two, "For him there was but one beloved face on earth." Ay, and arriving also, was he, at its consciousness. Even now it was "shining on him."

She was the first to break the silence. "You are late, Mr. Raynor. Lydia has been all impatience."

"I am a little late, Miss Margaret. There is always plenty to do on a Monday morning."

Lydia St. Clare might be impatient, but neither of them seemed impatient to hurry in to her. The windows of the house could not be seen from hence; clustering evergreens grew high and thick between, a very wilderness. In fact, the grounds generally were little better than a wilderness; the late owner was an absentee, and the place had been neglected. But it seemed beautiful as an Eden to these two, strolling along side by side, and lingering here, lingering there, on this bright day. The blue sky was almost cloudless; the sun gilded the budding trees; the birds sang as they hopped from branch to branch, building their nests: early flowers were coming up; all things spoke of the sweet spring time. The sweet spring time that is renewed year by year in nature when bleak winter dies; but which comes to the heart but once. It was reigning in the hearts of those two happy strollers; and it was in its very earliest dawn, when it is freshest and sweetest.

"Oh, see," said Margaret, stooping, "a beautiful double-daisy, pink-fringed! It has only come out to-day. Is it not very early for them?"

He took the little flower from her unresisting hand as she held it out to him. "Will you give it me, Daisy?" he asked, in a low, tender tone, his eyes meeting hers with a meaning.

Her eyes fell beneath his, her fingers trembled as she resigned the blossom. He had never called her by that pet name before: only once or twice had he said Margaret without the formal prefix.

"It is not worth your having — worth anyone's having," she stammered. "It is only a daisy."

"Only a daisy! It shall be my favourite flower of all flowers from henceforth.

"Indeed I think you must go in to Lydia."

"I am going in. There's a sweep of wind! You will catch cold without your hat."

"I never catch cold, Mr. Raynor. I never have anything the matter with me."

"Could you give me a pin?"

"A pin! Yes" — taking it out of her waistband. "Here's one. What is it for?"

He put the daisy into his button-hole, so that its pink-and-white head just peeped out, and fastened it with the pin. Margaret protested hotly.

"Oh, don't; please don't! Mamma will laugh at you, Mr. Raynor. Such a stupid little flower!"

"Not stupid to me," he answered. "As to laughing, Mrs. St. Clare can laugh at it as much as she pleases: and at me too."

The house was gained at last. Crossing the flagged entrance hall, they entered a very pretty light morning-room, its curtains and furniture of a pale green, bordered with gold. Mrs. St. Clare, a large, fair woman with a Roman nose, lay back in an easy-chair, a beautifully worked screen, attached to the white marble mantelpiece, shading her face from the fire. Her gown was black and white: grey and black ribbons composed her head-dress. She looked half dead with ennui: those large women are often incorrigibly idle and listless: she never took up a needle, she never cared to turn the pages of a book. She was indolent by nature, and she had grown entirely so during her life in India before the death of her husband, Colonel St. Clare.

But her face lighted up to something like animation when Mr. Raynor entered and went forward. Margaret fell into the background. After shaking hands with Mrs. St. Clare, he turned to the opposite side of the fire-place; where, in another easy-chair, enveloped in a pink morning-wrapper, sat the invalid, Lydia.

She was a tall, fair, Roman-nosed young woman too, promising to be in time as large as her mother. As idle she was already. Dr. Raynor said all she wanted was to exert herself: to walk and run, and take an interest in the bustling concerns of daily life as other girls did; the need talk no more of nervousness and chest-ache then.

Frank felt her pulse, and looked at her tongue, and inquired how she had slept; with all the rest of the usual questioning routine. Lydia answered fretfully, and began complaining of the dulness of her life. It was this wretched Cornish mining country that was making her worse: she felt sure of it.

"And that silly child, Daisy, declared this morning that it was the sweetest place she ever was in!" added Miss St. Clare, in withering contempt, meant for Daisy. "She said she should like existence, as it is just at present, to last for ever!"

Frank Raynor caught a glimpse of a painfully-blushing face in the distance, and something like a smile crossed his own. He took a small phial, containing a tonic, from his pocket, which he had brought with him, and handed it to the invalid.

"You will drive out to-day as usual, of course, Miss St. Clare?" said he.

"Oh, I suppose so," was the careless answer. "I don't know how we should get over the hours between luncheon and dinner without the drive. Not that I care for it."

"Talking of dinner," interposed Mrs. St. Clare, "I want you to dine with us to-day, Mr. Raynor. Is that a *daisy* in your coat? What an absurd ornament!"

"Yes, it is a daisy," replied Frank, looking down on it. "Thank you very much for your invitation. I will come if I can."

"I cannot allow you to say If."

Frank smiled, and gave a twist to the lavender glove in his hand. He liked to be a bit of a dandy when he called at the Mount. As to dining there—in truth he desired nothing better. But he was never quite sure of what he could do until the hour came.

"A doctor's time is not his own, you know, Mrs. St. Clare."

"You must really give yours to us this evening. Our dinners are insufferably dull when we sit down alone."

So Frank Raynor gave the promise—and he meant to keep it if possible. Ah, that he had not kept it! that he had stayed at home! But for that unfortunate evening's visit to the Mount and its consequences, a great deal of this history would not have been written.

The day went on. Nothing occurred to prevent Frank's fulfilling his engagement. The dinner hour at the Mount was seven o'clock. It was growing dusk when Frank, a light coat thrown over his evening dress, started for his sharp walk to it, but not dark enough to obscure objects. Frank meant to get over the ground in twenty minutes: and, really, his long legs and active frame were capable of any feat in the matter of speed. That would give him ten minutes before dinner for a chat with Daisy: Mrs. and Miss St. Clare rarely entered the drawing-room until the last moment.

"Going off to dine again with that proud lot at the Mount!"

enviously remarked Mr. Pellet, as he noted Frank's attire from his usual post of observation, the threshold of his shop door. "It's fine to be him!"

"Blase," called out his master from within, "where have you put that new lot of camomile blows?"

Mr. Blase was turning leisurely to respond, when his quick red-brown eyes caught sight of something exceedingly disagreeable to him: a meeting between Frank and Rosaline Bell. She had come into the village apparently from home: and she and Frank were now halting to talk together. Mr. Blase was splitting with wrath and envy.

He would have given his ears to hear what they were saying. Frank was laughing and chattering in that usual gay manner of his, that most people found so attractive; she was listening, her pretty lips parted with a smile. Even at this distance, and in spite of the fading light, Mr. Blase could see her shy, half-conscious look, and the rose-blush on her cheeks.

And Frank stayed there, talking and laughing with her as though time and the Mount were nothing to him. He thought no harm, he meant no wrong. Frank Raynor never *meant* harm to living mortal. If he had but been as cautious as he was well-intentioned!

"Blase!" reiterated old Edmund Float, "I want to find they new camomile blows, just come in. Don't you hear me? What have you done with them?"

Mr. Blase was utterly impervious to the words. They had parted now: Frank was swinging on again; Rosaline was coming this way. Blase went strolling across the street to meet her: but she, as if purposely to avoid him, suddenly turned down an opening between the houses, and was lost to sight, and to Blase Pellet.

"I wonder if she cut down there to avoid me?" thought he, standing still, in mortification. And there was a very angry look on his face as he crossed back again from his fruitless errand.

Daisy was not alone in the drawing-room this evening. Whether Frank's gossip with Rosaline had been too long, or whether he had not put on as much speed in walking as usual, it was just a minute past seven when he reached the Mount. All the ladies were assembled: Lydia and Daisy in blue silk; Mrs. St. Clare in black satin. Their kinsman had been dead six months, and the young ladies had just put off mourning for him; but Mrs. St. Clare wore hers still.

Daisy looked radiant: at any rate, in Frank's eyes: a very fairy. The white lace on her low body and sleeves was hardly whiter than her fair neck and arms: one white rose nestled in her hair.

"Dinner is served, madam."

Frank offered his arm to Mrs. St. Clare: the two young ladies followed. It was a large and very handsome dining-room: the table, with its white cloth, and its glass and silver glittering under the waxlights,

looked almost lost in it. Lydia faced her mother; Frank and Daisy were opposite each other. He looked well in evening dress: worthy to be a prince, thought Daisy.

The conversation turned mostly on the festivities of the following evening. Mrs. St. Clare was to give a dance in honour of her youngest daughter's birthday. It would not be a large party at the best; the neighbourhood did not afford that; but some guests from a distance were to sleep in the house, and remain for a day or two.

"Will you give me the first dance, Daisy?" Frank seized an opportunity of whispering to her, as they were all returning to the drawing-room together.

Daisy shook her head, and blushed again. Blushed at the familiar word "Daisy," which he had not presumed to use until that day. But it had never sounded so sweet to her from other lips.

"I may not," she answered. "Mamma has decided that my first dance must be with some old guy of a Cornish baronet—Sir Paul Trellasis. — Oh, *going*, do you say! Why? It is not yet nine o'clock."

"I am obliged to go," he answered: "I promised Dr. Raynor. I have to see a country patient for him to-night."

Making his apologies to Mrs. St. Clare for his early departure, and stating the reason, Frank left the house. It was a cold and very light night: the skies clear, the moon intensely bright. Frank went on with his best step. About half-way across the Bare Plain he met Rosaline Bell. The church clock was striking nine.

"Why, Rose! Have you been all this time at Granny Sandon's?"

"Yes; all the time," she answered. "I stayed to help her into bed. Poor granny's rheumatism is very bad: she can scarcely do anything for herself."

"Is her rheumatism bad again? I must call and see her. A cold night, is it not?"

"I am nearly perished," she said. "I forgot to take a shawl with me."

But Rosaline did not look perished. The meeting had called up warmth and colouring to her face, so inexpressibly beautiful in the full, bright moonbeams. A beauty that might have stirred a heart less susceptible than was Frank's.

"Perished, are you!" he cried. "Let us take a dance together, Rose." And, seizing her by the two hands, he danced about with her on the path, in very lightness of spirit.

"Oh, Mr. Raynor, pray don't! I must be going home, indeed, sir." Mother will think I'm lost."

"There! Are you warm now? I must go, also. Just a good-night kiss, Rose."

And before she could resist—if, indeed, she had meant to resist—

Frank Raynor snatched a kiss from the lovely face, released her hands, and went swiftly away over the Bare Plain.

There was not much harm in this: and most assuredly Frank intended none. That has been already said. He was apt to act without thought; to do mad things upon impulse. He admired Rosaline's beauty amazingly, and he liked to talk and laugh with her. He might not have chosen to steal a kiss from her in the face and eyes of Trennach: but what harm could there be when they were alone in the moonlight?

And if the moon had been the sole spectator, no harm would have come of it. Unfortunately, a pair of human eyes had been looking on as well—Mr. Blase Pellet's. After shutting up the shop that night, ill luck had put it into Mr. Pellet's head to take a walk over to Mrs. Bell's. He went in the hope of seeing Rosaline: in which he was disappointed: and was now on his way home again.

Rosaline stood gazing after Frank Raynor. No one but herself knew how dear he was to her; no one ever would know. The momentary kiss seemed still to tremble on her lips; her heart beat wildly. Wrapt in this ecstatic confusion, it was not to be wondered at that she neither saw nor heard the advance of Mr. Pellet; or that Frank, absorbed in her and in the dance, had previously been equally unobservant.

With a sigh, Rosaline at length turned, and found herself face to face with the intruder. He had halted close to her, and was standing quite still.

"Blase!" she exclaimed, with a faint scream. "How you startled me!"

"Where have you been?" asked Blase, in a sullen tone. "Your mother says you've been out for I don't know how many hours."

"I've been nowhere but to Granny Sandon's. Good-night to you, Blase: it is late."

"A little too late for honest girls," returned Blase, putting himself in her way. "Have you been stopping out with *him*?" pointing to the fast-disappearing figure of Frank Raynor.

"I met Mr. Raynor here, where we are standing; and was talking with him for about a minute."

"It seems to me you are always meeting him," growled Blase, suppressing mention of the dance he had seen, and the kiss that succeeded it.

"Do you want to quarrel with me, Blase? It seems so by your tone."

"You met him at dusk this evening as you were going to old Sandon's—if you *were* going there; and you meet him now in returning," continued Blase. "It's done on purpose."

"If I did meet him each time, it was by accident. Do you suppose I put myself in the way of meeting Mr. Raynor?"

"Yes, I do. Come!"

"You shall not say these things to me, Blase. Just because you chance to be a fifteenth cousin of mother's, you think that gives you a right to lecture me."

"You are always out and about somewhere," contended Blase. "What on earth d'ye want at that old Sandon's for ever?"

"She is so sad and lonely, Blase," was the pleading answer, given in a sweet tone of pity. "Think of her sorrow! Poor Granny Sandon!"

"What do you call her 'Granny' for?" demanded Blase, who was in a fault-finding mood. "She's no granny of yours, Rosaline."

Rosaline laughed slightly. "Indeed, I don't know why we call her 'Granny,' Blase. Everybody does.—Let me pass."

"Everybody doesn't.—No: you are not going to pass yet. I intend to have it out with you about the way you favour that fool, Raynor. Meeting him at all hours of the day and night!"

Rosaline's anger was aroused. In her heart she disliked Blase Pellet. He had given her trouble for some time past in trying to force his attentions upon her. It seemed to her that half the work of her life consisted in devising contrivances to repress him.

"How dare you speak to me in this manner, Blase Pellet? You have no right to do it, and you never will have."

"You'd rather listen to the false palaver of that stuck-up gentleman, Raynor, than you would to the words of an honest man like me."

"Blase Pellet, hear me once for all," vehemently retorted the girl. "Whatever Mr. Raynor may say to me, it is nothing to you; it never will be anything to you. If you speak in this way of him again, I shall tell him of it."

She eluded the outstretched arm, and ran swiftly home. Blase Pellet, standing to watch, saw the light within as she opened the door and entered.

"Is it nothing to me!" he repeated, in a chap-fallen tone. "You'll find that out before we are a day older, Miss Rosaline. I'll stop your fun with that proud fellow, Raynor."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE BARE PLAIN.

"In vain I look from height and tower,
No wished-for form I see;
In vain I seek the woodbine bower—
He comes no more to me."

So sang Rosaline Bell in the beams of the morning sun. They came glinting through the hyacinths in the window, and fell on the cups and saucers. Rosaline stood at the kitchen table, washing up the breakfast

things. She wore a light print gown, with a white linen collar fastened by a small silver brooch.

An expression of intense happiness sat on her beautiful face. This old song, that she was singing to herself in a low undertone, was one that her mother used to sing to her when she was a child. The words came from the girl half unconsciously ; for, while she sang, she was living over again in thought the past night's meeting with Frank Raynor on the Bare Plain.

"Rosie !"

The fond name, called out in her mother's voice, interrupted her. Putting down the saucer, then being dried, she advanced to the staircase door, which opened from the kitchen, and stood there, tea-cloth in hand.

"Yes, mother ? Did you want me ?"

"Has your father gone out, Rose ?"

"Yes. He said he should not be long."

"Oh no, I daresay not !" crossly responded Mrs. Bell ; her tone plainly implying that she put no faith whatever in any such promise. "They'll make a day of it again, as they did yesterday. Bring me up a drop o' warm water in half an hour, or so, Rose, and I'll get up."

"Very well, mother."

Rose returned to her tea-cups, and resumed her song ; resumed it in very gladness of heart. Ah, could she but have known what this day was destined to bring forth for her before it should finally close, she had sunk down in all the blankness of despair ! But there was no foreshadowing of it on her spirit.

" 'Twas at the dawn of a summer morn
My false love hied away ;
O'er his shoulder hung the hunter's horn,
And his looks were blithe and gay.

" 'Ere the evening dew-drops fall, my love,
He thus to me did say,
'I'll be at the garden gate, my love '—
And gaily he rode away."

Another interruption. Somebody tried the door—of which Rosaline had a habit of slipping the bolt—and then knocked sharply. Rosaline opened it. A rough-looking woman, miserably attired, stood there : an inhabitant of one of the poorest of the dwellings in this quarter.

"I wants to know," cried this woman, in a voice as rough as her words, and with a pronunciation that needs translation for the uninitiated reader, "whether they men be at work to-day ?"

"I think not," replied Rosaline.

"There's that man o' mine gone off again to the Golden Shaft, and he'll make hisself bad, as he did yesterday ! What the plague does your father go and fill they up with lies about the Whistlers for ?"

Now then! that's what I'd like to know. If Bell had heered they Whistlers, others 'ud ha' heered they."

"I can't tell you anything at all about it, Mrs. Janes," returned Rosaline, civilly but very distantly; for she knew this class of people to be immeasurably her inferiors, and held them at arms' length. "You can ask my father about it yourself; he'll be here by-and-by. I can't let you in now; mother's just as poorly as ever to-day, and she cannot bear a noise."

Closing the door as she spoke, and slipping the bolt of it, lest rude Molly Janes should choose to enter by force, Rosaline took up her song again.

"I watched from the topmost, topmost height,
Till the sun's bright beams were o'er,
And the pale moon shed her vestal light—
But my lover returned no more."

Whether the men were still incited by a dread of the supposed ill-luck that the Seven Whistlers had warned them of, and were really afraid to descend into the mines, or whether they only seized on that pretext to make a second day's holiday, certain it was, that not a single man of them had gone to work. Ross, the overseer, reiterated his threats of condign punishment again and again; and reiterated in vain.

Mr. John Float at the Golden Shaft was doing a great stroke of business these idle days. As many men as could find a seat in his hospitable house took possession of it. Amongst them was Josiah Bell. Few persons had ever seen Bell absolutely intoxicated; but he occasionally took enough to render him more sullen than usual; and at such times he was sure to be quarrelsome.

Turning out of the Golden Shaft on this second day between twelve and one o'clock, Bell went along the street towards his home, together with some more men who lived in that direction. Dr. Raynor chanced to be standing on the pavement outside his house, and accosted Bell. The other men walked on.

"Not at work yet, Bell!"

"Not at work yet," responded Bell, echoing the words as doggedly as he dared, and standing still to face the Doctor while he said it.

"How long do you mean to let this fancy about the Seven Whistlers hinder you? When is it to end?"

Bell's eyes went out straight before him with a speculative look, as if trying to foresee what and where the end would be, and his tone and manner lost their fierceness. This fancy in regard to the Seven Whistlers—as the Doctor styled it—had evidently taken a serious, nay, a solemn hold upon him. Whether the other men anticipated ill-fortune from it, or no, it was most indisputable that Bell did.

"I don't know, sir," he said, quite humbly. "I should like to see the end."

"Are you feeling well, Bell?" continued Dr. Raynor, in a tone of sympathy—for the strange, grey pallor was on the man's face still.

"I'm well enough, Doctor. Why shouldn't I be?"

"You don't look well."

Bell shifted his stout stick from one hand to the other. "The Whistlers gave me a turn, I suppose," he said.

"Nonsense, man! You should not be so superstitious."

"Look here, Dr. Raynor," was the reply—and the tone was lowered to something that sounded very like fear. "You know of that bad hurt I got in the pit in Staffordshire—which lamed me for good? Well, the night previous to it I heard the Seven Whistlers. They warned me of ill-luck then; and now they've warned me again, and I know it will come. I'll not go down the mine till three days have passed. The other men may do as they like."

He walked on with the last words. Mr. Blase Pellet, who had been looking on at the passing interview from over the way, gazed idly after Bell until he had turned the corner and was out of sight. All in a moment, as though some recollection came suddenly to him, Blase tore off his white apron, darted in for his hat, and ran after Bell; coming up with him just beyond the parsonage.

What Mr. Blase Pellet communicated to him, to put Bell's temper up as it did, was best known to himself. If the young man had any conscience, one would think that a weight of remorse, for what that communication led to, must lie on it to his dying day. He was telling tales of Rosaline and Frank Raynor, representing the latter gentleman and matters in general in a very unfavourable light indeed.

"If he dares to molest her again, I'll knock his head off," threatened Bell to himself and the Bare Plain, as he parted with Pellet, and made his way across it, muttering and brandishing his stick. The other men had disappeared, each within his home. Bell was about to enter his, when Mrs. Molly Janes came out of her one room, her hair hanging, her gown in tatters, her voice shrill. She placed herself before Bell.

"I've been asking about my man. They tells me he is in a-drinking at the Golden Shaft. I'll twist his ears for him when he comes out on't! And now I'm a-going to have it out with you about they Whistlers! What the ——"

Mrs. Janes's eloquence was summarily cut short. With a sharpish push of the hand, Josiah Bell thrust her out of his way, strode on to his own door, and shut it against her.

Rosaline was alone, laying the cloth for dinner. Bell, excited by drink, abused his daughter roundly, accusing her of "lightness" and all kinds of unorthodox things. Rosaline stared at him in simple astonishment.

"Why, father, what can you be thinking of?" she exclaimed. "Who has been putting this into your head?"

"Blase Pellet," said he. "And I'd a mind to knock him down for his pains—whether it's true, or whether it's not."

"True!—that I could be guilty of light conduct!" returned Rosaline. "Father, I thought you knew me better. As to Mr. Raynor, I don't believe he is capable of an unworthy thought. He would rather do good in the world than evil."

And her tone was so truthful, her demeanour so consciously dignified, that Bell felt his ill thoughts melt away as if by magic; and he wished he *had* knocked Mr. Pellet down.

The day went on to evening, and tea was being partaken of at Dr. Raynor's. Five o'clock was the usual hour for the meal, and it was now nearly seven: but the Doctor had been some miles into the country to see a wealthy patient, and Edina waited for him. They sat round the table in the best parlour: the one whose bow-window looked on to the street. Its warm curtains were drawn before the window now, behind the small table that held the beautiful stand of white coral, brought home years ago by Major Raynor; the fire burned brightly; two candles stood near the tea-tray. Behind the Doctor, who sat facing the window, was a handsome cabinet, a few choice books on its shelves. Frank, reading a newspaper and sipping his tea, sat between his uncle and Edina.

This was the night of the ball at the Mount. Edina was going to it. A most unusual dissipation for her; one she was entirely unaccustomed to. Trennach afforded no opportunity for this kind of visiting, and it would have been all the same to Miss Raynor though it had. As she truly said, she had not been at a dance for years and years. Frank was making merry over it, asking her whether she could remember her "dancing steps."

"I am so sorry you promised for me, papa," she suddenly said. "I have been regretting it ever since."

"Why, Edina?"

"It is not in my way, you know, papa. And I have had the trouble of altering a dress."

"Mrs. St. Clare was good enough to press for your company, Edina—she candidly told me she had not enough ladies—and I did not like to refuse. She wanted *me* to go," added Dr. Raynor, with a broad smile.

"I'm sure, papa, you would be as much of an ornament as I shall be—and would be far more welcome," said Edina.

"Ornament? Oh, I leave that to Frank."

"I daresay you could dance, even now, as well as I can, papa."

Something like a spasm crossed his face. *He* dance now! Edina little thought how near—if matters in regard to himself were as he suspected—how very near he was to the end of all things.

"You look tired, papa," she said.

"I am tired, child. That horse of mine does not seem to carry me as easily as he did. Or perhaps it is I who feel his action more."

Dr. Raynor suppressed a sigh, and quitted the room. Frank rose, put his elbow on the mantelpiece, and glanced at his good-looking face in the glass.

"What time do you mean to start, Edina?"

"At half-past eight. I don't mean to go in later than nine. It is a shame to invite people at so late an hour!"

"It is late for Trennach," acknowledged Frank. "Mrs. St. Clare has brought her fashionable hours with her."

At that moment, the entrance-door was pushed violently open, and an applicant clattered in, in a desperate hurry. Frank went out to see.

Mrs. Molly Janes was lying at her home, half killed, in immediate need of the services of either Dr. or Mr. Raynor. Mr. Janes had just staggered home from his day's enjoyment at the Golden Shaft: his wife was unwise enough to attack him in that state; he had retaliated and nearly "done" for her. Such was the substance of the report brought by the messenger—a panting lad with wild eyes.

"You will have to go, Frank," said the Doctor. "I am sorry for it, but I am really not able to walk there to-night."

"Of course I will go, sir," replied Frank, in his cheery and ready way. "I shall be back long before Edina wants me. What are Molly Janes' chief injuries?" he asked, turning to the boy.

"He've stamped on her like a fiend, master," answered the alarmed lad. "He've broke all her bones, he have."

A bad account. Frank prepared to start without delay. He had left his hat in the parlour; and while getting it he said a hasty word to Edina—he had to go off to the cottages on the Bare Plain. Edina caught up the idea that it was Mrs. Bell who needed him: she knew of no other patient in that quarter.

"Come back as quickly as you can, Frank," she said. "You have to dress, you know. Don't stay chattering with Rosaline."

"With Rosaline!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Oh, I see. It is not Mrs. Bell who wants me, Edina; it is Molly Janes. She and her husband have been at issue again."

With a gay laugh at Edina's advice touching Rosaline, and at the rather serious and certainly meaning tone she gave it in, Frank hastened away. The fact was, some odds and ends of joking had been heard in the village lately, coupling Frank's name with the girl's, and they had reached the ears of Edina. She intended to talk to Frank warningly about it on the first opportunity.

When about half-way across the Bare Plain, Frank saw some man before him, in the bright moonlight, who was not over steady on his

legs. The lad had gone rushing forward, thinking to come in for the tail of the fight ; should it, haply, be still going on.

"What, is it you, Bell !" exclaimed Frank, recognizing the man as he overtook and passed him. "You've had nearly as much as you can carry, have you not ?" he added, in light good-nature.

Bell, it was. Staggering home from the Golden Shaft. A very early hour indeed, considering the state he was in, for him to quit the seductions of that hostelry. He had been unwise enough to go back to it after his dinner, and there he had sat till now. Had he kept sober, the matter whispered to him by Blase Pellet would not have returned to rankle in his mind : as it was, it began to do so ominously. With every cup he took, the matter grew in his imagination, until it assumed an ugly black picture. And he had now come blundering forth with the intention of "looking out for himself," as ingeniously suggested to him by Blase Pellet. In short, to track the steps and movements of the two implicated people : to watch whether they met and all about it.

"Perhaps other folks will have as much as they can carry soon," was his insolent retort to Frank, lifting the heavy stick in his hand menacingly. At which Frank only laughed, and sped onwards.

A terribly savage mood came over Josiah Bell. Seeing Frank strike off to the right, towards the row of miners' dwellings, he concluded that it was to his house he was bent—to see Rosaline. And he gnashed his teeth in fury, and gave vent to a fierce oath because he could not overtake the fleet steps of the younger man.

Bursting in at his own door when he at length reached it, he sent his eyes round the room in search of the offenders. But all the living inmates that met his view consisted of his wife in her mob cap and white apron, knitting, as usual, in her own chair, and the cat sleeping upon the hearth.

"Where's Rosaline ?"

Mrs. Bell put down her knitting—a grey worsted stocking for himself—and sighed deeply as she gazed at him. He had not been very sober at dinner-time : he was worse now. Nevertheless she felt thankful that he had come home so soon.

"She's gone out !" he continued, before Mrs. Bell had spoken : and it was evident to her that the fact of Rosaline's being out was putting him into a furious passion. "Who is she along with ?"

"Rose went over after tea to sit a bit with Granny Sandon. Granny's worse to-day, poor thing ! I'm expecting her back every minute."

Bell staggered to the fire-place and stood there lifting his stick. His wife went on with her knitting in silence. To reproach him now would do harm instead of good. It must be owned that his exceeding to this extent was quite an exceptional case : not many times had his wife known him do it.

"Where's Raynor?" he broke out.

"Raynor!" she echoed, in surprise. "Do you mean Mr. Frank Raynor? I don't know where he is."

"He came in here a few minutes ago."

"Bless you, no, not he," returned the wife, in an easy tone, thinking it the best tone just then.

"Tell ye, I saw him come here."

"The moonlight must have misled you, Josiah. Mr. Raynor has not been here to-day. Put down your stick and take off your hat, man: and sit down and be comfortable."

To this persuasive invitation, Bell made no reply. Yet a minute or two he stood in silence, gazing at the fire; then, grasping his stick more firmly in his hand, and ramming his hat upon his head, he staggered out again, shutting the door with a bang. Mrs. Bell sighed audibly: she supposed he was returning to the Golden Shaft.

Meanwhile Frank Raynor was with Mrs. Molly Janes. Her damages were not so bad as had been represented. Leaving her a model of artistically-applied sticking-plaster, Frank started for home again. The night was most beautiful; the sky clear, save for a few fleecy clouds that now and then passed across it, the silvery moon riding grandly amidst them. Just as Frank came opposite the Bottomless Shaft he met Rosaline, on her way home from Granny Sandon's.

They stayed to speak—as a matter of course. Frank told her of the affray that had taken place, and the punishment of Molly Janes. While Rosaline listened, she kept her face turned in the direction she had come, as though she were watching for some one: and her quick eyes discerned a figure approaching in the bright moonlight.

"Good-night—you pass on, Mr. Frank," she suddenly and hurriedly exclaimed. "I am going to hide myself here for a minute."

Darting towards the Bottomless Shaft, she took refuge amongst the mounds by which it was surrounded: mounds which looked just like great earth batteries, thrown up in time of war. Instead of passing on his way, Frank followed her, in sheer astonishment: and found her behind the furthest mound at the back of the Shaft.

"Are you hiding from *me*?" he demanded. "What is it, Rosaline? I don't understand."

"Not from you," she whispered. "But why didn't you go on? Hush! There's some one going to pass that I don't want to see."

"Who is it? Your father? I think he is gone home."

"It is Blase Pellet," she answered. "I saw him at the shopdoor as I came by, and I thought he followed me. He talks nonsense, and I would rather walk home alone. "Listen! Can we hear his footsteps, do you think, sir? He must be just going by now."

Frank humoured her: he did not particularly like Blase Pellet himself, but he had no motive in being still, save that it was her wish. On

the contrary, he would have preferred to be travelling homewards, for he had not much time to lose. Whistling very softly, scarcely above his breath, his back against the nearest mound, he watched the white clouds coursing in the sky.

"He must have passed now, Rosaline."

She stole cautiously away, to reconnoitre ; and came back with a beaming face.

"Yes," she said, "and he has made good speed, for he is out of sight. He must have set off with a run, thinking to catch me up."

"I wonder you were not afraid to go through the mounds by yourself and pass close to the Bottomless Shaft !" cried Frank, in a tone of raillery, and no longer deeming it necessary to lower his voice. "Old Sandon's ghost might have come out, you know, and eaten you up."

"I am not afraid of old Sandon's ghost," said Rosaline.

"I daresay not !" laughed Frank.

In a spirit of bravado, or perhaps in very lightness of heart, Rosaline ran suddenly through the zigzag turnings and windings, until she stood close to the mouth of the Shaft. Frank followed her, quickly too, for in truth he was impatient to be gone.

"I am listening for the ghost's groans," said she, her head bent forward over the yawning pit, her ear turned in the attitude of listening. It was a dangerous position : the least slip, one incautious step nearer, might have been irredeemable : and Frank put his arm round her waist to protect her.

Another half moment passed, when they hardly knew what occurred. A bellow of rage, a heavy stick brandished over them in the air by some intruder, and Rosaline started back, to see her father. Old Bell must have been hiding amongst the mounds on his own score, looking out for what there might be to see.

Down came the stick heavily on Frank's shoulder. An instant's scuffle and a push ensued : a yell from a despairing, falling man ; a momentary glimpse of an upturned face, a shrill cry of horror in a woman's voice ; an agonised word from her companion ; a heavy thud, as of some dull weight dropping into the earth at what sounded like a frightful distance, and all was over. And Francis Raynor and the unhappy Rosaline were alone ; standing together under the pitiless moonlight.

(To be continued.)

ROSE LODGE.

IT looked the prettiest place imaginable, lying under the sunlight, as we stood that first morning in front of the bay. The water was smooth and displayed lovely colours : now green, now blue, as the clouds passed over the face of the sky, now taking tinges of brown and amber ; and towards evening it would be pink and purple. Further on, the waters were rippling and shining in the sun. Fishing vessels stood out at sea, plying their craft ; little cockle-shells, their white sails set, disported on it ; rowing boats glided hither and thither. In the distance the grand waves of the sea were ebbing and flowing ; a noble merchantman, all her canvas filled, was passing proudly on her outward-bound course.

"I should like to live here," cried Tod, turning away at last.

And I'm sure I felt that I should. For I could watch the ever-changing sea from morning to night, and not tire of it.

"Suppose we remain here, Johnny?"

"To live?"

"Nonsense, lad! For a month. I am going for a sail. Will you come?"

After the terrible break-up of our boating tour, we came to this little place, Cray Bay, which was on the sea coast, a few miles beyond Templemore. Our pleasure cut short at the beginning of the holiday, we hardly knew what to do with the rest of it, and felt like two fish suddenly thrown out of water. At Cray Bay we found one small inn, which bore the odd sign of the Whistling Wind, and was kept by Mrs. Jones, a stout Welshwoman. The bed-room enjoyed a look-out at some stables, and would not hold much more than the two small beds in it ; and she said she could not give us a better.

The discomforts of the lodging were forgotten when we strolled out to look about us, and saw the beauties of the sea and bay. Cray Bay was a very primitive spot : little else but a bettermost fishing place. It had not then been found out by the tour-taking world. Its houses were built anyhow and anywhere ; its shops could be counted on your fingers : a butcher's, a baker's, a grocer's, and so on. Fishermen called at the doors with fish, and countrywomen with butter and fowls. There was no gas, and the place at night was lighted with oil-lamps. A trout-stream lay at the back of the village, half a mile away.

Stepping into a boat, on this first morning, for the sail proposed by Tod, we found its owner a talkative old fellow. His name was Druff, he said ; he had lived at Cray Bay most of his life, and knew every inch of its land and every wave of its sea. There couldn't be a nicer

spot to stop in for the summer, as he took it ; no, not if you searched the island through : and he supposed it was first called Cray Bay after the cray-fish, they being caught in plenty there.

"More things than one are called oddly in this place," remarked Tod. "Look at that inn : the Whistling Wind ; what's that after ?"

"And so the wind do hoostle on this here coast ; 'deed an' it do," returned Druff. "You'd not forget it if you heered it in winter."

The more we saw of Cray Bay that day, the more we liked it. And Tod made up his mind to stay for a time if lodgings could be found.

"But, what would they say at home to our staying here ?" I asked, the next morning at breakfast.

"What they chose," said Tod, cracking his fourth egg.

"I am afraid the Pater —"

"Now, Johnny, you need not put in your word," he interrupted, in the off-hand tone that always silenced me. "It's not your affair. We came out for a month, and I am not going back home, like a bad sixpence returned, before the month has expired. Perhaps I shall tack a few weeks on to it. I am not dependent on the Pater's purse."

No ; for he had his five hundred pounds lying untouched at the Worcester Old Bank, and his cheque-book in his pocket.

Breakfast over, we went out to look for lodgings ; but soon feared it might be a hopeless search. Two little cottages had a handboard stuck on a stick in the garden with "Lodgings" on it. But the rooms in each proved to be a tiny sitting-room and a more tiny bed-room, smaller than the garret at the Whistling Wind.

"I never saw such a world as this," cried Tod. "If you want a thing you can't get it. Oh, by George ! Look there, Johnny !"

We had come to the last house in the place—a fresh-looking, charming cottage, with a low roof and a green verandah, that we had stopped to admire yesterday. It faced the bay, and stood by itself in a garden that was a perfect bower of roses. The green gate bore the name "Rose Lodge" ; and in the parlour window appeared a notice "To Let," which had not been there the previous day.

"Fancy their having rooms to let here !" cried Tod. "How lucky !"

In he went impulsively, striding up the short gravel path, and knocked at the door. It was opened by a tall grenadier of a female, rising six feet, with a spare figure and sour face. She had a large cooking apron on, dusted with flour.

"You have lodgings to let," said Tod. "Can I see them ?"

"Lodgings to let ?" she repeated, scanning us up and down attentively ; and her voice sounded harsh and rasping. "I don't know that we have. You had better see Captain Copperas."

She threw open the door of the parlour ; a small square bright looking room ; with a gay carpet, a cottage piano, and green chairs.

Captain Copperas came forward : a retired seaman, as we heard

later ; tall as the grenadier, and with a brown weather-beaten face. But in voice and manners he, at any rate, did not resemble her, for they were just as pleasant as they could be.

"I have no lodgings," said he. "My house is to let ; and the furniture to be taken to."

Which announcement was of course a vast check upon Tod. He sat, looking very blank, and then explained that we only required lodgings for a month or so.

"It's a pity but you wanted a little house," said Captain Copperas. "This is the most compact, desirable, perfect little dwelling mortal man ever was in. Rent twenty-six pounds a year only, furniture to be bought out-and-out for a hundred and twenty-five. It would be a little Eden—a Paradise—to those who had the means to take it."

As he spoke, he regarded us individually and rather pointedly. It looked as much as to doubt whether we had the means. Tod (conscious of his five hundred pounds in the bank) threw his head up.

"Oh, I have the means," said he, as haughtily as you please. "Johnny, did you put any cards in your pocket? Give Captain Copperas one."

I laid one of Tod's cards on the table. The captain took it up.

"It is a great grief to me to leave the house," he remarked. "Especially after having just settled in it, and laying in a stock of the best furniture in a plain way, purchased in the best market ! Downright grief."

"Then why do you leave it?" naturally asked Tod.

"Because I have to go afloat again," said the sailor, his face taking a rueful expression. "I thought I had given up the sea for good ; but my old employers won't let me give it up. They know my value as a master, and have offered me large terms for another year or two of service. A splendid new East Indiaman, two thousand tons register, and—and, in short, I don't like to be ungrateful, so I have said I'll go."

"Could you not keep on the house until you come back?"

"My sister won't let me keep it on. Truth to say, she never cared for the sea and wants to get away from it. That exquisite scene"—extending his hand towards the bay, and to a steamer working her way onwards near the horizon—"has no charms for Miss Copperas. No : I can only give the place up, and dispose of the furniture. It will be a fine sacrifice. I shall not get the one half of the money I gave for it ; don't look to."

I could read Tod's face as a book, and the eager look in his eyes. He was thinking how much he should like to seize upon the tempting bargain ; to make the pretty room we sat in, and the prettier prospect yonder, his own. Captain Copperas appeared to read him also.

"You are doubting whether to close with the offer, or not," he said, with a frank smile. "You might make it yours for a hundred and twenty-five pounds. Perhaps—pardon me ; you are both but young—you may not have the sum readily at command?"

"Oh yes, I have," said Tod candidly. "I have it lying at my banker's, in Worcester. No, it's not for that reason I hesitate. It is—it is—fancy me with a house on my hands!" he broke off, turning to me with a laugh.

"It is an offer that you will never be likely to meet with again, sir."

"But what on earth could I do with the house and the things, after we had stayed here for a month or two?" urged Tod.

"Why, dispose of them again of course," was the ready answer of Captain Copperas. "You'd find plenty of people willing to purchase, and to take the house off your hands. Such an opportunity as this need not go begging. I only wish I had not to be off in a hurry; I should make a very different bargain."

"I'll think of it," said Tod, as we got up to leave. "I must say it is a nice little nest."

In the doorway we encountered a tall lady, with a brown face and a scarlet top-knot. She wore a thick gold chain, and bracelets to match.

"My sister, Miss Copperas," said the captain. And he explained to her in a few words our business, and the purport of what had passed.

"For goodness sake, don't lose the opportunity!" cried she, impressively affectionate, as though she had known us all our lives. "So advantageous an offer was never made before; and but for my brother's obstinately and wickedly deciding to go off to that wretched sea again, it would not be made now. Yes, Alexander"—turning to him—"I do call it quite wicked. Only think, sir,"—to Tod:—"a houseful of beautiful furniture, every individual thing that a family can want; a piano here, a table-cloth press in the kitchen; plate, linen, knives, forks; a garden full of roses and a roller for the paths: and all to go for the miserable sum of a hundred and twenty-five pounds! But that's my brother all over. He's a true sailor. Setting himself up in a home to-day, and selling it off for an old song to-morrow!"

"Well, well, Fanny," he said, when he could get a word in edgeways to stem the torrent of eloquence, "I have agreed to go, and I must go."

"Have you not been over the house?" she resumed. "Then do pray come. This is the dining-room," throwing open a door behind her.

It was a little side-room, looking up the coast and over the fields, with a few chairs and tables in it. Upstairs we found three chambers, with their beds and other things. It all looked very comfortable.

"This is the linen closet," said Miss Copperas, opening a narrow door at the top of the stairs, and displaying some shelves that seemed to be well filled. "Sheets, table-cloths, dinner-napkins, towels, pillow-cases; everything for use. Anybody taking the house, has only to step in, hang up his hat, and find himself at home. Look at those plates and dishes!" she ran on, as we got down again and entered the kitchen. "They are very nice—and enough to dine ten people."

They were of light blue ware, and looked nice enough on the dresser shelves. The grenadier stood at the table, chopping parsley on a trencher, and did not condescend to take any notice of us.

Out in the garden next, amidst the roses—which grew all round the house, clustering everywhere. They were of that species called the cabbage rose; large, and fragrant, and most beautiful. It made me think of the Roses by Bendemeer's stream.

"I should like the place of all things!" cried Tod, as we went down to get a sail; and found Druff seated in his boat, smoking. "I say, Druff, do you know Captain Copperas?—Get in, Johnny."

"Lives next door to me at Rose Lodge," answered Druff.

"Next door! What, is that low whitewashed shanty your abode! How long has Copperas lived here?"

"A matter of some months," said Druff. He came in the spring."

"Are they nice kind of people?"

"They be civil to me," answered Druff. "Sent my missis a bottle o' wine and some hot broth t'other day when she was ill——"

A sudden lurch put a stop to the discourse, and in a few minutes we glided out of the bay, Tod's gaze fixed on Rose Lodge.

"My mind's made up, Johnny. I shall take the place."

I dropped my knife and fork in very astonishment. Our sail over, we were at dinner in the bar-parlour of the Whistling Wind.

"Surely you won't do it, Tod!"

"Surely I shall, lad. I never saw such a nice little nest in all my life. And there's no risk: you heard what Copperas said. I shall get my money back again when we want to leave it."

"Look here, Tod: I was thinking a bit while we sat in the boat. Does it not seem to you to be too good to be genuine?"

It was Tod's turn now to drop his knife and fork; and he did it angrily. "Just tell me what you mean, Johnny Ludlow."

"All that furniture, and the piano, and the carpets: it looks such a heap to be going for a hundred and twenty-five pounds."

"Well?"

"I can't think that Copperas means it."

Not mean it! Why, you young muff! *There are the things*, and he offers them. If Copperas chooses to part with them for half their value, am I to tell him he's a fool? The man is driven into a corner through lack of time. Sailors are uncommonly improvident."

"It is such an undertaking, Tod."

"It is not your undertaking."

"Of course it is a tremendous bargain; and it is a beautiful little place to have. But the Pater will never forgive you, Tod; or me either. He will say the world's coming to an end."

"If you are afraid of him, young Johnny, you can betake yourself off. Hand up your plate for some more lamb, and hold your tongue."

Away went Tod to Captain Copperas, and told him he would take the house, and drew out his cheque-book, to give a cheque for the money there and then. But the Captain, like an honest man, refused to receive it until an agreement was signed; and, if all the same, he said, he would prefer money down, to a cheque. Cheques were all very good, no doubt, but sailors did not much understand them. Oh, of course, Tod answered, shaking him by the hand; he would get the money.

Enquiring of our landlady for the nearest bank, Tod was directed to St. Ann's, a town three miles off; and we started for it, pelting along the hot and dusty road. The bank found—a small one with a glazed bow-window—Tod presented a cheque for a hundred and fifty pounds, twenty-five of it being for himself, and asked the clerk to cash it.

The clerk looked at the cheque and at us. "This is not one of our cheques," he said. "We have no account in this name."

"Can't you read?" asked Tod. "The cheque is upon the Worcester Old Bank. You know it well by reputation, I presume?"

The clerk whisked into a small kind of box, divided from the office by glass, where sat a bald-headed gentleman writing at a desk full of pigeon holes. A short conference, and then the latter came to us, holding the cheque in his hand.

"We will send and present this at Worcester," he said; "and shall get an answer the day after to-morrow. No doubt we shall then be able to give you the money."

"Why can't you give it me now?" asked Tod, rather fiery.

"Well, sir, we should be happy to do it; but it is not our custom to cash cheques for strangers."

"The cheque will be honoured," flashed Tod. "I have five hundred pounds lying there! Do you suppose I want to cheat you?"

"Oh, certainly not," said the banker with suavity. "Only, you see, we cannot break through our standing rules. Call upon us the day after to-morrow, and doubtless the money will be ready."

Tod came away swearing. "The infamous upstarts! To refuse to cash my cheque! Johnny, it's my belief they take us for a couple of adventurers."

The money came. Getting it from the cautious banker, we rushed straight to Rose Lodge from St. Ann's. Tod signed the agreement, and paid the cash in Bank of England notes. Captain Copperas brought out a bottle of champagne, which tasted uncommonly good to our thirsty throats. He was to leave Cray Bay that night on his way to Liverpool, and Miss Copperas would give up possession on the morrow. Elizabeth, the grenadier, was to remain with us as servant. Miss Copperas recommended her, hearing Tod say he did not know where

to look for one. We bargained with her to keep up a good supply of pies, and to pay her twenty shillings a month.

"Will you allow me to leave one or two of my boxes for a few days?" asked Miss Copperas of Tod, when we went down on the following morning, and found her equipped for departure. "This has been so hurried a removal that I have not had time to pack all my things, and must leave it for Elizabeth to do."

"Leave anything you like, Miss Copperas," replied Tod, as he shook hands. "Do what you please. I'm sure the house seems more like yours than mine."

She thanked him, wished us both good-bye, and set off to walk to the coach office, attended by the grenadier, and a boy wheeling her luggage. And we were in possession of our new home.

It was just delightful. The weather was charming, though precious hot, and the new feeling of being in a house of our own, with not as much as a mouse to control us and our movements, was satisfactory in the highest degree. We passed our days sailing about with old Druff, and came home to the feasts prepared by the grenadier, and to sit among the roses. Altogether we had never had a time like it. Tod took the best chamber, facing the sea; I had the smaller one over the dining-room, looking up coastwards.

"I shall go fishing to-morrow, Johnny," Tod said to me one evening. "We'll bring home some trout for supper."

He was stretched on three chairs before the open window; coat off, pipe in mouth. I turned round from the piano. It was not much of an instrument. Miss Copperas had said, when I hinted so to her on first trying it, that it wanted "age."

"Shall you? All right," I answered, sitting down by him. The stars were shining on the calm blue water; lights, looking like stars also, twinkled from some vessels at anchor.

"If I thought they'd not quite die of the shock, Johnny, I'd send the pater and madam an invitation to come off here and pay us a visit. They would fall in love with the place at once."

"Oh, Tod, I wish you would!" I cried, eagerly seizing on the words. "They could have your room, and you mine, and I would go into the little one at the back."

"I daresay! I was only joking, lad."

"I wish you'd let me write and tell them what we've done."

"No," said he. "I don't want the pater to whirl himself off here and spoil our peace—for that's what would come of it."

"But I ought to write to the mother, Tod. She must be wondering why I don't."

"Wondering won't give her the fever. Understand me, Mr. Johnny, you are not to write."

Breakfast over in the morning, we crossed the meadows to the trout

stream, with the fishing-tackle and a basket of prog. Tod complained of the intense heat. The dark blue sky was cloudless; the sun beat down upon our heads.

"I'll tell you what, Johnny," he said, when we had borne the blaze for an hour on the banks, the fish refusing to bite; "we should be all the cooler for our umbrellas. You be off and get them."

The low front window stood open when I reached home. It was the readiest way of entering; and I passed on to the passage. The grenadier came dashing out of her kitchen.

"Oh!" said she, looking scared, "It's you!"

"I have come back for the umbrellas, Elizabeth; the sun's like a furnace. Why! what have you got there?"

The kitchen was strewn with clothes from one end of it to the other. On the floor stood the two boxes left by Miss Copperas.

"I am only putting up Miss Copperas's things," returned Elizabeth, in her surly way. "It's time they were sent off."

"What a heap she must have!" I remarked: and left the grenadier to her work.

We got home in the evening, tired out. The grenadier had a choice supper ready; and, in answer to me, said the trunks of Miss Copperas were packed and gone. When bed-time came, Tod was asleep, at the window, and wouldn't awake. The grenadier had gone to her room ages ago; I wanted to go to mine.

"Tod, then! Do please wake up. It is past ten."

A low growl answered me. And in that same moment I became aware of some mysterious stir outside the front gate. People seemed to be trying it. The grenadier always locked it at night.

"Tod! Tod! There are people at the gate—trying to get in."

The tone and the words aroused him. "Eh? What do you say, Johnny? People at the gate?"

"Listen! They are whispering. They are trying the fastenings."

"What on earth do they want at this time of night?" growled Tod. "And why can't they ring, like decent people? What's your business!" he roared out from the window. "Who the dickens are you?"

"Hush, Tod! It—it can't be the squire, can it? Come down to look after us."

The suggestion silenced him for a moment. "I—I don't think so, Johnny," he slowly said. "No, it's not the squire: he would be letting off at us already from the top of his voice; he'd not wait to come in to do it. Let's go and see. Come along."

Two young men stood at the gate. One of them turned the handle impatiently as we went down the path.

"I wish to see Captain Copperas."

"Then you can't see him," answered Tod, woefully cross after being startled out of his sleep. "Captain Copperas does not live here."

"Not live here!" repeated the man. "That's gammon. I know he does live here."

"I tell you he does not," haughtily repeated Tod. "Do you doubt my word?"

"Who does live here, then?" asked the man in a different tone; evidently impressed.

"Mr. Todhetley."

"I can take my oath that Captain Copperas lived here ten days ago."

"What of that? He is gone, and Mr. Todhetley's come."

"Can I see Mr. Todhetley?"

"You see him now. I am he. Will you tell me your business?"

"Captain Copperas owes me a small account, and I want it settled."

The avowal put Tod in a rage; and he showed it. "A small account! Is this a proper time to come bothering gentlemen for your small accounts—when folks are gone to bed, or going?"

"Last time I came in the afternoon. Perhaps that was the wrong time? Any way, Captain Copperas put me off, saying I was to call some evening, and he'd pay it."

"And I'll thank you to betake yourself off again now. How dare you disturb people at this unearthly hour? As to Captain Copperas, I tell you that he is no longer here."

"Then I should say that Captain Copperas was a swindler."

Tod turned on his heel at the last words, and the men went away, their retreating footsteps echoing on the road. I thought I heard the grenadier's window being shut, so the noise must have disturbed her.

"Swindlers themselves!" cried Tod, as he fastened the house-door. "I'll lay you a guinea, Johnny, they were two loose fellows trying to sneak inside and see what they could pick up."

Nevertheless, in the morning he asked the grenadier whether it was true that such men had come there after any small account. And the grenadier resented the supposition indignantly. Captain Copperas owed no "small accounts" that she knew of, she said; and she had lived with him and Miss C. ever since they came to Cray Bay. She only wished she had heard the men herself last night; she would have answered them. And when, upon this, I said I thought I had heard her shut her window down, and supposed she had been listening, she denied it, and accused me of being fanciful.

"Impudent wretches!" ejaculated Tod. "To come here and asperse a man of honour like Copperas!"

That day passed off quietly, and to our thorough enjoyment; but the next one was fated to bring events. Some words of Tod's, as I was pouring out the breakfast coffee, startled me.

"Oh, by Jupiter! How have they found us out here?"

Looking up, I saw the postman entering the gate with a letter. The

same thought struck us both—that it was some imperative mandate from the squire. Tod went to the window and held out his hand.

"For Elizabeth, at Captain Copperas's," read out the man as he handed it to Tod. It was like a relief; and Tod sent me with it to the grenadier.

But in less than one minute afterwards she came into the room, bathed in tears. The letter said that her mother was lying ill at their home, some unpronounceable place in Wales, and begging to see her.

"I'm sorry to leave you at a pinch; but I must go by the afternoon coach," sobbed the grenadier. "I can't help myself."

Well, of course, there was nothing to be said against it. A mother was a mother. But it was awkward. The grenadier graciously offered to cook our luncheon before starting.

We went off for a sail. Upon getting back at one o'clock, we found a huge meat pie upon the luncheon table, and the grenadier with her bonnet on. Tod paid her what was due.

Presently was heard the bumping of boxes on the stairs. At the gate stood the boy with the truck, ready to wheel them to the coach office, as he had wheeled those of Miss Copperas. Tod was helping himself to some more pie, when the grenadier threw open the door.

"My boxes are here, gentlemen. Will you like to look at them?"

"Look at them for what?" asked Tod, after staring a minute.

"To see that I'm taking none of your property away inside them."

At last Tod understood what she meant, and felt inclined to throw the dish at her head. "Shut the door, and don't be a fool," said he.

"And I hope you'll find your mother better," I called out after him.

"And now, Johnny, what are we to do?" he cried, when the lunch was over and there was nobody to take it away. "This is like a second experience of Robinson Crusoe."

We left it where it was, and went to the shops and the Whistling Wind, asking if they knew of a servant. But servants seemed not to be forthcoming at a pinch; and we told our troubles to old Druff.

"My missis shall come in and see a bit to things for ye," said he. "She can light the fire in the morning anyway, and boil the kettle."

And with the help of Mother Druff—an ancient dame who went about in clogs—we got on till after breakfast in the morning, when a young girl came after the place. She wore a pink gauze bonnet, smart and tawdry, and had a pert manner.

"Can you cook?" asked Tod.

The substance of her answer was, that she could do everything under the sun, provided she were not "tanked" after. Her late missis was for ever a tanking. Would there be any washing to do?—because washing didn't agree with her. And how often could she go out, and what was the wages?

Tod looked at me in doubt, and I slightly shook my head. It struck me that she would not do at any price. "I think you won't suit," said he to her.

"Oh," returned she, all impertinence. "I can go, then, where I shall suit: and so, good morning, gentlemen. There's no call for you to be so uppish. I didn't come after your forks and spoons."

"The impudent young hussie!" cried Tod, as she slammed the gate. "But she might do better than nobody, Johnny."

"I don't like her, Tod. If it rested with me, I'd rather live upon bread and cheese than take her."

"Bread and cheese!" he echoed. "It is not a question of only bread and cheese. We must get our beds made and the knives cleaned."

It seemed rather a blue look out. Tod said he would go up again to the Whistling Wind, and tell Mother Jones she must find us some one. Picking a rose as he went down the path, he met a cleanly-looking elderly woman, who was entering. She wore a dark apron, and old-fashioned white cap, and said she had come after the place.

"What can you do?" began Tod. "Cook?"

"Cook and clean too, sir," she answered. And I liked the woman the moment I saw her.

"Oh, I don't know that there's much cleaning to do, beyond the knives," remarked Tod. "We want our dinners cooked, you know, and the beds made. That's about all."

The woman smiled at that, as if she thought he knew little about it. "I've been living at the grocer's, up yonder, sir, and they can give me a good character, though I say it. I'm not afraid of doing all you want, and of giving satisfaciton, if you'd please to try me."

"You'll do," said Tod. "Can you come in at once?"

"When you like, sir. Would you please go for my character?"

"Oh, bother that," said he. "I've no doubt you are all right. Can you make pigeon pies?"

"That I can, sir."

"You'll do, then. What is your name?"

"Elizabeth Ho——."

"Elizabeth!" he interrupted, not giving her time to finish. "Why the one just gone was Elizabeth. A grenadier, six feet high."

"I've been mostly called Betty, sir," she remarked, saying that she'd go and come back with her aprons. Tod looked after her.

"You like her, don't you, Johnny?"

"That I do. She's a good sort; honest as honest can be. You did not ask her about wages."

"Oh, time enough for that," said he.

And Betty turned out to be as good as gold. Her history was a curious one; she told it to me one evening in the kitchen; in her

small way she had been somewhat of a martyr. But God had been with her always, she said, through trouble and trial.

We got a letter from Mrs. Todhetley, redirected on from Sunbury. The chief piece of news it contained was, that the squire and old Jacobson had gone off to Great Yarmouth for a fortnight.

"That's good," said Tod. "Johnny, lad, you may write home now."

"And tell about Rose Lodge?"

"Tell all you like. I don't mind madam. She'll have leisure to digest it against the pater returns."

I wrote a long letter, and told everything, going into the minute details that she liked to hear, about the servants, and all else. Rose Lodge was the most wonderful bargain, I said, and we were both as happy as the days were long.

The church was a little primitive edifice near the sands. Upon getting home from service on Sunday morning, we found the cloth not laid. As Tod had ordered dinner to be on the table, he sent me to the kitchen to blow up Betty.

"It is quite ready and waiting to be served; but I can't find a clean table cloth," said Betty.

"Why, I told you where the table cloths were," shouted out Tod, who heard the answer. "In that cupboard at the top of the stairs."

"But there are no table cloths there, sir," cried she. "Nor anything else either, except a towel or two."

Tod went up in a passion, bidding her follow him, and flung the door open. He thought she had looked in the wrong place.

But Betty was right. With the exception of two or three old towels and some stacks of newspapers, the cupboard was empty.

"By Jove!" cried Tod. "Johnny, that grenadier must have walked off with all the linen!"

Whether she had, or not, none, to speak of, could be found now. Tod talked of sending the police after her, and wrote an account of her delinquencies to Captain Copperas, addressing the letter to the captain's brokers in Liverpool.

"But," I debated, not quite making matters out to my own satisfaction, "the grenadier wanted us to examine her boxes, you know."

"All for a blind, Johnny."

The next morning, Monday, upon looking from my window, something struck me as being the matter with the garden. What was it? Why, all the roses were gone! Down I rushed, half dressed, burst out at the back door, and gazed about me.

It was a scene of desolation. The rose trees had been stripped; every individual rose was clipped neatly off from every tree. Two or

three trees were left untouched before the front window ; all the rest were rifled.

"What the mischief is the matter, Johnny?" called out Tod, as I was hastily questioning Betty. "You are making enough noise."

"We have had robbers here, Tod. Thieves. All the roses are stolen."

Down he came, full rush, and stamped about the garden like anybody wild. Old Druff and his wife saw him, and came up to the palings. Betty, busy in her kitchen, had not noticed the disaster.

"I see Tasker's people here betimes this morning," observed Druff. "A lot of 'em came. 'Twas a pity, I thought, to slice off all them nice big blows."

"Saw who?—saw what?" roared Tod, turning his anger upon Druff. "You mean to confess to me that you saw these rose-trees rifled, and did not stop it?"

"Nay, master, how could I interfere with Tasker's people?"

"Who are Tasker's people?" foamed Tod. "Who is Tasker?"

"Tasker? Oh, Tasker's that there man at the white cottage on t'other side the village. Got a big garden round it."

"Is he a poacher? Is he a robber?"

"Bless ye, master ; Tasker's no robber."

"And yet you saw him take my roses?"

"I see him for certain. I see him busy with the baskets as the men filled 'em."

Dragging me after him, Tod went striding off to Tasker's. We knew the man by sight ; he was a kind of nuseryman. Tasker was standing near his greenhouse.

"Why did I come and steal your roses?" he quietly repeated, when he could understand Tod's fierce demands. "I didn't *steal* 'em, sir ; I picked 'em."

"And how dared you do it?—who gave you leave to do it?" foamed Tod, turning purple with rage.

"I did it because they were mine."

"Yours ! Are you mad?"

"Yes, sir, mine. I bought 'em and paid for 'em. I bought 'em of Captain Copperas. I had 'em from the garden last year and the year afore. Three pounds I gave for 'em this time. The Captain sold 'em to me a month ago, and I was to take my own time for gathering them."

"I don't think Tod had ever felt so *floored* in all his life. He stood back against the pales and stared. A month ago we had not known Captain Copperas.

"I might have took all the lot : 'twas in the agreement ; but I left ye a few afore the front winder," said Tasker in an injured tone. "And you come and attack me like this !"

"But what do you want with them? What are they taken for?"

"To make otter of roses. I've sold 'em to the distillers."

"At any rate, I would have taken them openly," snapped Tod.

"Not come like a thief in the night."

"But then I had to get 'em afore the sun was powerful," reasoned Tasker.

Tod was silent all the way home. Betty brought in the coffee.

"Pour it out," said he to me. "But, Johnny," he presently added, as he stirred his cup slowly round, "I *can't* think how it was that Copperas forgot to tell me he had sold the roses."

I must say we were rather in the dumps that day, and went off fishing. I did wish I had not said so much about the roses to Mrs. Todhetly. What I wrote was, that they were brighter and sweeter and better than those other roses by Bendemeer's Stream.

I thought of the affair all day long. I thought of it when I was going to bed at night. Putting out the candle, I leaned from my window and looked down on the desolate garden. The roses had made its beauty.

"Johnny! Johnny, lad! Are you in bed?"

The cautious whisper came from Tod. Bringing my head inside the room, I saw him at the door in his slippers and braces.

"Come into my room," he whispered. "Those fellows who disturbed us the other night are at the gate again."

Tod's light was out and his window open. We could see a man bending down outside the gate, fumbling with its lock. Presently the bell was pulled very gently, as if the ringer thought the house might be asleep and he did not want to awaken it. There was something quite ghostly to the imagination in being disturbed at night like this.

"Who's there?" shouted Tod.

"I am," answered a cautious voice. "I want to see Captain Copperas."

"Come along, Johnny. This is getting complicated."

We went out. The man was not either of the two who had come before. Tod spoke to him, but did not open the gate.

"Are you a friend of the Captain's?" whispered the man.

"Yes, I am," said Tod. "What then?"

"Well, see here," resumed he in a confidential tone. "If I don't get to see him, it will be the worse for him. I come as a friend; come to warn him."

"But I tell you he is not in the house," argued Tod. "He has let it to me and left Cray Bay. His address? No, I cannot give it."

"Very well," said the man, "I came out of friendliness. If you know where he is, you just tell him that Jobson has been here, and warns him to look out for squalls. That's all."

"I shall begin to believe we are living in some mysterious castle, if

this kind of thing is to go on," remarked Tod, when the man had gone. "It seems deuced queer, altogether."

It seemed queerer the next morning. For a gentleman walked in, and demanded payment for the furniture. Captain Copperas had forgotten to settle for it, he said—if he *had* gone away. Failing payment, he should be obliged to take away the chairs and tables. Tod flew into a rage, and ordered him out of the place. Upon which their tongues went in for a pitched battle, and gave out some unorthodox words. Cooling down by-and-by, an explanation was come to.

He was a member of some general furnishing firm, ten miles off. Captain Copperas had done them the honour to furnish his house from their stores, including the piano, paying a small portion on account. Naturally they wanted the rest. In spite of certain strange doubts that were arising touching Captain Copperas, Tod resolutely refused to give any clue to his address. Finally the applicant agreed to leave matters as they were for three or four days, and wrote a letter to be forwarded to Copperas.

But the news that arrived from Liverpool staggered us more than all. The brokers sent back Tod's first letter to Copperas (telling of the grenadier's having marched off with the linen), and wrote to say that they did not know any Captain Copperas; that no gentleman of that name was in their employ, or in command of any one of their ships. People began to apply, too, for petty accounts that seemed to be owing—a tailor, a bootmaker, and others. Betty shed tears.

One evening, when we had come in from a long day's fishing, and were sitting at dinner in the front room in rather a gloomy mood, wondering what was to be the end of it, we caught sight of a man's coat whisking its skirts up to the front door.

"Sit still," cried Tod to me, as the bell rang. "It's another of those precious creditors. Betty, don't you open the door. Let the fellow cool his heels a bit."

But, instead of cooling his heels, the fellow stepped aside to our open window, and stood looking in at us. I leaped out of my chair, and nearly out of my skin. It was Mr. Brandon.

"And what do you two fine gentlemen think of yourselves?" began he, when we had let him in. "You don't starve, at any rate, it seems."

"You'll take some, won't you, Mr. Brandon," said Tod politely putting the breast of a duck upon a plate, while I drew a chair for him to the table.

Ignoring the offer, he sat down by the window, threw his yellow silk handkerchief across his head, and opened upon our delinquencies in his thinnest tones. In the squire's absence, Mrs. Todhetley had given him my letter to read, and begged him to come and see after us,

for she feared Tod might be getting himself into some inextricable mess. Old Brandon's sarcasms were keen. To make it worse, he had heard of the new complications, touching Copperas and the furniture, at the Whistling Wind.

"So!" said he, "you must take a house and its responsibilities upon your shoulders, and pay the money down and make no inquiries!"

"We made lots of inquiries," struck in Tod, wincing.

"Oh, did you! Then I was misinformed. You took care to ascertain whether the landlord of the house would accept you as tenant; whether the furniture was the man's own to sell, and had no liabilities upon it; whether the rent and taxes had been paid up to that date?"

As Tod had done nothing of the kind, he could only slash away at the other duck and bite his lips.

"You took to a closet of linen, and did not think it necessary to examine whether linen was there, or whether it was all dumb show——"

"I'm sure the linen was there when we saw it," interrupted Tod.

"You can't be sure; you did not handle it, or count it. The squire told you you would hasten to make ducks and drakes of your five hundred pounds. It must have been burning a hole in your pocket. As to you, Johnny Ludlow, I gave you credit for some sense."

"I could not help it, sir. I'm sure I should never have mistrusted Captain Copperas——" But doubts had floated in my mind whether the linen had not gone away in those boxes of Miss Copperas, that I saw the grenadier packing.

Tod selected a paper from the letter-case in his breast-pocket, and handed it to Mr. Brandon. It was a cheque for one hundred pounds.

"I thought of you, sir, before I began upon the ducks and drakes. But you were not at home, and I could not give it you then. And I thank you very much indeed for what you did for me."

Mr. Brandon read the cheque and nodded his head sagaciously.

"I'll take it, Joseph Todhetley. If I don't, the money will only go in folly." By which, I fancied he had not meant to have the debt repaid to him.

"I think you are judging me hardly," said Tod. "How was I to imagine that the man was not on the square? When the roses were here, the place was the prettiest I ever saw. And it was dirt cheap."

"So was the furniture, to Copperas," observed Mr. Brandon.

"What is done is done," growled Tod. "May I give you some raspberry pudding?"

"Some what? Raspberry pudding! Why, I should not digest it for a week. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know, sir. Do you?"

"Yes. Get out of the place to-morrow. It's going to be stripped, I hear. Green simpletons, you must be! I daresay the landlord will

let you off by paying him three months' rent. I'll see him myself. And you will both come home with me, like two young dogs with their tails burnt."

"And lose all my money?" cried Tod.

"Ay; and think yourself well off that it is not more. You have no redress; as to finding Copperas, you may as well set out to search for the philosopher's stone. It is nobody's fault but your own; and if it shall bring you caution, it may be an experience cheaply bought."

"I could never have believed it of a sailor," Tod remarked ruefully to old Druff.

"Ugh! fine sailor he was!" grunted Druff. "*He* warn't a sailor. Not a reg'lar one. Might ha' been about the coast a bit in a home vessel, perhaps—naught more. As to that grenadier, I believe she was just another of 'em—a sister."

But we heard a whiff of news later that told us Captain Copperas was not quite so bad as he seemed. After he had taken Rose Lodge and furnished it, some friend, for whom in his good nature he had stood surety to a large amount, let him in for the whole, and ruined him.

And so that was the inglorious finale to our charming retreat by Bendemeer's Stream.

JOHNNY LUDLOW.



OUTWARD-BOUND.

In the calm harbour where the vessels ride,
Safe-moored, our ship awaits the rising tide,
And first red glimmer of the dawning day,
The tide has risen, and the morning's ray
Shows anchor lifted, sails in swelling pride
Unfurling to the breeze; then, fair and wide—
While the bold prow casts up the glitt'ring spray—
Daring the deepest waters of the bay.
Where is our good ship bound for? Will she gain
The port for which she steers? Will no rude blast,
No flash of lightning, shiver boom and mast,
And leave her wrecked upon the seething main?
Our hopes are ventured in the brave "*New Year*,"
God speed her on her way with freight so dear!

EMMA RHODES.

AT GRENOBLE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A NIGHT IN A MONASTERY."

WE steamed away from Dover about four hours before Captain Boyton was to plunge himself into the waters, and commence crossing on his own account. It was a splendid night, but dark : the sea perfectly calm. The cabins were crammed ; and sundry Frenchmen, spite of the smooth water, had evidently resigned themselves to a mauvais quart d'heure in their lives. The stars had never been more bright, and were reflected in myriads of dancing lights upon the ripples of the dark water. The night breeze swept over us laden with the freshness of sea and sky, bracing up body and spirit after the confinement of town life.

Some hours later, as we were rushing towards Paris, dawn broke over the sky and exhibited my fellow travellers in what, under other circumstances, would have been thought the various attitudes of inebriation. Those first moments of daybreak are not pleasant to a sleepless wanderer. The light, as it quietly creeps over the face of nature, seems to be stealing a certain amount of life from you ; until by and by the sun shoots above the horizon with healing in his wings.

Paris at last. And one poor drowsy traveller, having lost his ticket from Calais (he had probably torn out two coupons instead of one on leaving the boat), had the consolation of paying over again the sum of thirty-eight francs for his carelessness. This completely aroused him.

I found that the train southward would not start before 7 P.M. Therefore I passed the time in looking up old friends, and in revisiting the lions of the capital : lions I had seen hundreds of times before. Gazing in awe and sadness at the tombs of Rousseau and Voltaire in the Panthéon : in admiration and wonder at the Sainte Chapelle, of which the beauty and architecture, and richly stained windows seemed more than ever to harmonize ; again in awe and wonder at the matchless beauty of Notre Dame, and its almost unrivalled Gothic grandeur : living over again in imagination the many and strange scenes its lifetime has witnessed. Where in 1431 Henry VI. of England was crowned King of France ; and where, in 1793, the insane and bloodthirsty revolutionists, disowning all religion, celebrated a feast to the Goddess of Reason ; whilst a woman, stuck upon the high altar, impersonated the goddess herself and threw kisses to her worshippers. To-day service was going forward, and I listened spellbound as the tones of the organ and the voices of the chanters went rolling through the "long drawn aisles and

fretted vaults" of the cathedral. Finishing up in the afternoon with a drive to the Bois de Boulogne, where I was greeted with a sight of at least thirty fair brides in flowing white, and their bridal parties, who were hastening thither "pour faire la noce." It was Saturday, and Saturday in Paris is the great day for weddings amongst a certain class.

I had been travelling tantamount to four days and nights, and when I reached Lyons at 5 A.M. and entered the buffet for some refreshment, I found I had lost my voice. This was perplexing and a new experience. So upon entering the buffet a series of pantomimic gestures went forward with the waiters, to the amusement of such sleepy travellers as were sufficiently awake to take notice, and who had tumbled out of the train at Lyons, pêle mêle, for breakfast on their road to Marseilles.

And what guys they looked, both men and women! A large proportion of them were English, of course: and if there be one time above another when we cannot feel proud of our fair compatriots, it is when we meet them abroad on their travels. Their object sight-seeing, they are themselves the greatest sight to be seen. On this particular morning, yet cool and grey, the buffet might have been mistaken for a managerie of harmless lunatics. The men looked black and dust-stained, unshaven and cross. The ladies were becoming objects for a fifth of November. Eyes blinking, hair dishevelled, skirts draggle-tailed, shawls dragging, and bonnets hanging or flattened into every conceivable shape. The mysteries of chignons were revealed, and the latter seemed in jeopardy of parting with their owners. Ten minutes given to a very moderate supply of comestibles for which an extortionate price was demanded, and the whole troupe at the given signal (that abominable "En voiture, messieurs et dames, en voiture," just as you are in the middle of a scalding cup of coffee) shuffled across the rails, to their various compartments. A few moments more, doors banged, and away steamed the express towards Marseilles.

I was left alone in the buffet; the Grenoble train did not start for another ten minutes. Yet no; not alone: one other traveller had been left behind—a repulsive-looking little Frenchman, with a distressing cold in his head, and his body wrapped in a huge fur cloak. This gentleman was patrolling up and down the room like a bear in a cage, and, to my natural chagrin, when we started off again it was in the same compartment. It may fairly be doubted whether he had ever enjoyed the luxury of a warm bath. We both alighted at Grenoble, and some days after, happening to enter the principal hotel in the town at breakfast-time (half-past eleven), he was discovered devouring his fish with his fingers.

Grenoble, as most readers will know, is the chief town of the Isère; and the Isère is one of the most favoured departments of France.

Under the Ancien Régime, Grenoble was the Capital of the Dauphiné. The department of the Isère lies to the south-east of France, and takes its name from the important river which flows through its territories in a direction N.E. to S.W. The Isère is less remarkable for its length



SASSENAGE.

than its immense mass of water. It rises amongst the glaciers of the massive Iseran, a group of mountains in Savoy, between France and Italy, and finally empties itself into the Rhone. In its course near Grenoble, the river flows through the Graisivaudan, a valley by many considered to be the most beautiful in France, as it is undoubtedly one of the richest and most fertile.

The Rhone, says the proverb, runs upon golden sands. And verily, when we gaze upon its surface we can believe anything of its wondrously lovely and liquid green and azure waters. The Dauphiné is the richest province in France in botanical productions. Every plant pertaining to the extreme south is said to be indigenous to its soil ; and this owing to the variations of its climate, which are as numerous as the many heights and depths of this district. Wild animals abound in its woods and forests. The bear is found in the more deserted parts. The wild boar, once prevalent, has now become scarce ; the chamois inhabits heights inaccessible to man ; the stag is now almost extinct, but the fox is found extensively.

The Dauphiné, in the old days, was said to possess seven wonders, four of which are to be found in the department of the Isère. Of these four wonders the chief is the *Caves of Sassenage*, situated at a short distance from Grenoble, and reached by a delightful drive. These caves are at the foot of a rocky mountain, and, amidst black darkness, penetrate some way into the interior. A torrent of water rushes out from this subterranean passage, and empties itself at last into the Isère. Nothing can be more beautiful and romantic than this spot, with its mysterious caverns, its immense mountains, its rushing water, and its banks covered with wild flowers.

With regard to the history of its people, a few rare monuments are all that remain to testify to the existence of an unknown race that in the primitive ages occupied the department of the Isère. In those days Grenoble was nothing more than a small village on the right bank of the river. It possessed no importance whatever until the time of Diocletian and Maximilian, who surrounded it with fortifications to protect it against the inroads of the barbarians. It is said that St. Paul, on his road to Spain, stayed awhile at Vienne, then the capital of the Dauphiné, and left them his disciple Crescens, as their minister. Whether or not this be true, it is certain that this town possessed a Christian bishop in the first century.

The reign of the Dauphins, both of the first and second dynasty, was destitute of any very important events, occupied, as its leaders were, for the most part, with internal wars and strifes with the neighbouring petty lords or princes, and more especially directed against the counts of Savoie. The end of the 14th century was marked by persecutions organised against the Vaudois, a sect so called from their leader Peter de Vaud, or Valdo, who from the 12th century had preached first in Lyons, then in the mountains of the Dauphiné and Savoie, the doctrine that all things should be held in common by Christians. 230 unhappy martyrs perished at the stake from 1380 to 1394 ; and the persecution was only finally arrested by Louis XII. in 1501.

In 1572, the massacre of St. Bartholomew spared its victims in Grenoble, thanks to the noble courage and energy of the governor of

the province, who disobeyed the orders of the court. The protestants of the Dauphiné then took up arms, again headed by the brave leaders Montbrun and Lesdiguières, and met with alternate victories and reverses. On the 25th of November, 1590, Lesdiguières laid siege to Grenoble, which surrendered after 25 days of blockade. Henry IV., in gratitude, then conferred upon the Duke of Lesdiguières the governorship of Grenoble and the whole province, which became happy and prosperous under his wise rule.

Lesdiguières now became little less than king of the Dauphiné, and amongst his people was designated *king of the mountains*. To him Grenoble owed many of its fortifications, its quays, and the present ancient stone bridge, and the province was indebted to him for many useful works and improvements. The château de Vizille, one of the most ancient and most interesting buildings in the neighbourhood of Grenoble, was also constructed by him for his own residence, and here he was visited by Louis XIII.

Amidst other vicissitudes and disasters, the Dauphiné has suffered greatly from floods. The last one was perhaps the most terrible of all. On the 2nd of November 1859, the Isère suddenly rose and overflowed its banks, and in a few hours the town of Grenoble was under water to the depth of about five feet. In some portions of the town it even reached to the first floor windows. The town itself is well built, and possesses a few handsome buildings. Its position is perhaps superior in beauty of site to all others in the empire. Its chief branch of industry is the making of gloves. There are considerably over a hundred manufactories, which send forth annually above a million dozen pairs of gloves, valued at more than thirty millions of francs. This gives employment to nearly 25,000 hands, male and female. Such were the statistics when the census was last taken; but as all things, population and industry, the law of demand and supply, go on increasing year by year, the probability is that the above statement is now much below the mark.

In this charming and favoured spot it was now my fate to sojourn for some little time. It was a glorious morning, hot and sunny, as I gladly left the train and entered the town. But the heat had only very lately set in, and the surrounding mountains lay thick and white in their deep coverings of snow. The croix of the "Champ Roux," a cross twelve feet high, on the summit of one of the loftiest peaks, lay embedded in its pure but icy sepulchre. Nothing marked its position but a small, almost imperceptible thin tip of iron, which the hot sun had brought into view within the last day or two. More snow than usual had fallen this year, and by and by avalanches and floods might be looked for.

Grand, indeed, the mountains looked; powerful and wonderful. An inestimable privilege to be able to pass one's life, and have one's home

amongst them; to keep them constantly before the sight, for ever influencing the mind and the spirit. Is it possible for mankind to attain the same degree of holiness and perfection in the midst of the fretting, the fashion and frivolity of a metropolis, that it does or can attain when surrounded by these everlasting hills? hills which, like the boundless ocean, suggest reflections and breathe influences more of heaven and immortality, the wisdom and power of their Creator, than thoughts merely of earth and earthly aspirations? One thing at least is certain: the struggle after perfection in the gay world and fashionable throng must be a far harder fight and battle, though a more triumphant and meritorious victory, than it is for those who erroneously bury themselves in cloistered cells, or for those who can go to the mountains and sea for silent communion.



QUAI DE FRANCE, GRENOBLE.

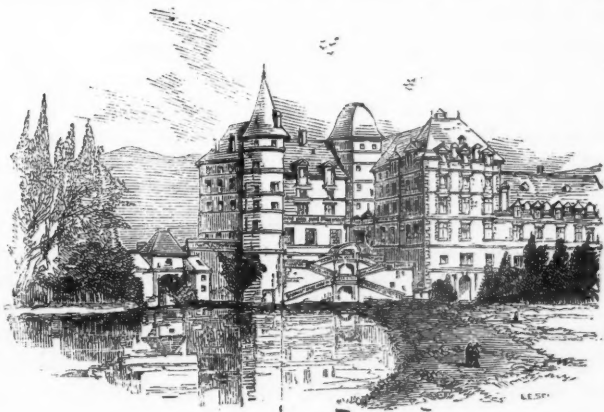
Here then I dwelt amidst such influences. At a few miles' distance from Grenoble, overlooking the beautiful valley of the Graisivaudan, and perched on the Alpine side, stands an old château, which became my head-quarters during my sojourn in this most favoured part of the world. Let me attempt to describe it.

Following a long, white, straight road for a considerable distance, you at length turn to the right, and a short, steep ascent lands you at the château. It is an old building. Large rambling rooms, some of them panelled in the quaint old mode so gratifying to the eye and taste; others fitted up in a more modern and graceful style. Old-fashioned fire places, with huge logs of wood burning upon the dogs; wood that throws up a crackling blaze and perfumes the room, and casts a rich quaint homely smell through corridors suggesting thoughts of a baker's oven, and delicious, new, hot, French bread and galettes. Each to his own customs: every country to its usages; but if wood

fires are not a success in England, they are at any rate very much appreciated and very much in place in these Alpine districts.

All the reception-rooms are on the ground floor: the ground floor of *this* part of the house; but the château being built on a slope, the back part of the house (or, as some people might call it, the front) possesses a floor yet lower, appropriated to the kitchen offices. The floor above is devoted to the bedrooms, and there is a small oratory for the use of the Roman Catholic members of the château's household. Let us take a glance at this oratory, of which the door is half open.

On a small shelf is the lamp usually kept burning before the altar, evidently having hastily been left by some one in the act of preparing it for use. A couple of chairs are at the foot of the two steps by



CHATEAU DE VIZILLE.

which the altar is approached. On the altar itself are candlesticks, an image, and some gaudy, tinselly flowers, with a small reading-desk, holding a copy of a book—probably a missal. On the right wall is an ill-painted picture of a saint or monk, with an expression that all the colouring and imagination of a *dévoté* could not interpret into the beauty of holiness. In the left wall, opposite this nightmare of a picture, is the only small window which gives light to the oratory. It is difficult to quit the place and shut it in with its silence and superstition, without a feeling of regret; for whatever may be the errors and ignorance of these devotees, how much is there about them that is laudable and worthy of honour.

But leaving the oratory to itself, with all that may be right or wrong about it, let us enter some of the rooms. Swing back one of those large French windows, and gaze out upon the scene before you. Hold your breath as you gaze: for, as in the oratory you have just quitted, the worshippers would stimulate their imaginations an religious

fervour by the help of golden images and painted flowers and saintly portraits, and soothe their senses by sweet smelling incense whose subtle properties throw a glow upon the fancy: so here you feel that you have thrown behind you all unhealthy and artificial influences, and stand before Nature herself in her most splendid aspect. The atmosphere you have just left is obliterated; you are awestricken at the presence of the work of the Creator (with all reverence be it spoken) fresh as when on the world's early morning were brought forth the mountains and the hills.

Before and around us are the snow mountains, white wavy undulations clearly mapping their outlines against the bright blue sky. At a certain distance from the summit the snow ceases, and the mountains show themselves as they are. Some barren and rugged, and uncultivated; others thick and dark with pine forests, in which you may lose yourself at pleasure if you are an Alpine climber: nothing but a compass will enable you to steer your course. Others again, far up the height, are a succession of gardens and vineyards, and pasture for the use of cattle. Winding paths, so steep as to be impracticable to the foot of one not accustomed to climbing, hide themselves on the mountain side, though easily found and boldly scaled by the sure footed Alpine peasants, and their herds of cows, goats, and painfully thin sheep—cattle certainly after Pharaoh's lean kind.

Below us, from the window whence we are gazing, stretches the vast plain and valley of the Graisivaudan, through which the Isère threads its silvery course. What landscape is perfect without water? and this river goes winding about for miles amidst this wild and splendid scenery, unconscious of the beauty around it, and of its own charms. Past many a village where daily the small and simple tragedies of human village life are enacted: the loves of Corydon and Phillis; the sorrows of an Atala; the intrigues of a Romeo and Juliet; the tomb of a Paul and Virginia, an Abelard and Héloïse. Past many an acre, and many a mile of dreary pasture land, with here and there a spot redeemed from bog and morass by some enterprising husbandman. Many a secret has floated down upon its bosom, to be revealed only on that great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be known. Down in that nook yonder we lose sight of its course. The mountains intervene, and it is now flowing past Grenoble; its gurgling waters keeping time to the throbs and beats of weal and woe of the great town.

Across there, somewhat to the left, in the natural outline of that mountain's slope, we see distinctly traced the head and face of the first Napoleon, apparently lying in the calm sleep of death, looking for all the world as the third Emperor of that name looked when lying in state on that last memorable day at Camden House. The image of the one conjures up the recollection of the other, and if inclined to

meditate—like Harvey amidst the tombs—a thought will flash over us of our own mutability, and that of our interests and all belonging to us—in comparison with these eternal hills, which have stood the test of ages unchanged and unchanging, and with which from this very fact this poor mortal body seems to have nothing in common. Alas! our life is but as the vapour which clings around these hills, so soon passeth it away, and our place is no more remembered. Well might the bird sing in the Garden of Armida:—

“So passes as a passing day
The flowering youth of man;
Nor April's mild returning ray
May bid him bloom again.
Then pluck, while yet the morn is bright,
The rose, ere day's serene soft light
Hath passed and faithless proved.
Oh, pluck the rose of love the while
Life, joy, and beauty on ye smile,
While loving ye are loved!”*

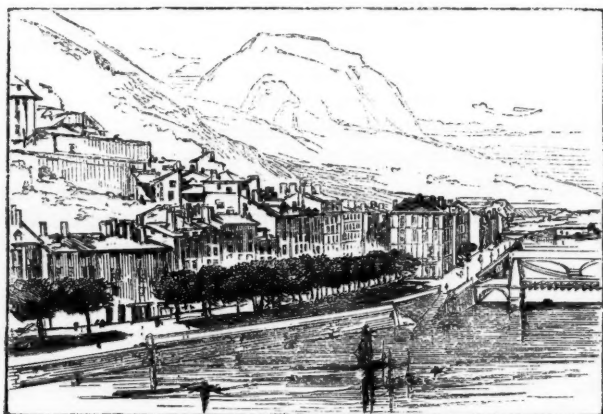
“The plain at our feet is dissected into green fields of various tints; yet are they destitute of hedges, a feature which adds so inestimably to the picturesqueness of our English landscapes. Immediately beneath us sleeps the small village: a few thatched cottages inhabited by the simple peasantry. A flying leap would almost land us far down upon one of their straw-built roofs. From one or other of them the blue smoke of the wood or peat fire is ascending; and in a scene so primitive and beautiful it is almost possible to fancy ourselves back in the primeval days when the incense of the evening sacrifice went up to Heaven. As night draws on, a white mist hovers over the river, by which its course may be traced long after light has faded. But the daylight is still broad and dazzling as we gaze. And hark! a strain of celestial music fills the air; a flood of melody; wave upon wave, now here, now yonder, now ascending, now softly lulling. It is the nightingale: the mingled harmony of hundreds of these feathered songsters, who here keep up an incessant chorus by day and night. We have nothing like this in all England. I doubt even if we have skies as pure and blue as those above us.

Now turn to the other side of the house. Passing through the front door into the grounds, we find ourselves upon a terrace in the mountain slope. Before us are orange-trees in large wooden boxes. Up to a certain height the slope is cultivated: here vegetable beds, there vine trellises. Still higher, a mountain path, and beyond that, woods and plantations. To our left is a long fine avenue of splendid trees, almost meeting overhead, the indispensable delight of the château; trees which shade you completely from the mid-day sun.

It was a luxurious pleasure when at home, to sit in this avenue in a

* Translated from Tasso by Alice King.

comfortable lounge, with a book or writing-desk, cool, shady, and quiet as it was, whilst the sun ran his hot course through the glaring sky. White fleecy clouds would chase each other above, and throw light and shadow and tone upon the landscape. Behind the avenue, the fruit trees, laden with blossom, pink and white, showered down their wealth upon the cool green grass, an ideal picture of snow in harvest. Occasionally the fancy would seize some of us to migrate from the shady avenue to the narrower but pleasant shelter of one of these trees, and there enjoy the showers of blossom that every slight breeze scattered around. In all the air the nightingales kept up a ceaseless strain of enraptured music; whilst at intervals the blackcap joined in with his strangely beautiful note, in charm second only to that of the



QUAI PERRIERE, GRENOBLE.

nightingale itself. Instinctively White's faithful description rises up to memory.*

It was nothing less than fairyland. The long avenue of trees in their early spring freshness; the valley at our feet, through which the silvery river ran its course; the mountains on every side covered with snow, their summits turned to a glorious pink and rose glow at sunset, as if they had blushed at the touch of an angel's wings; near at hand the vineyards and the flowers, and the fruit trees rivalling the whiteness of the mountain tops, with their superabundance of blossom; the quiet stillness of the whole scene, save for the flood of the nightingale's song, or the far-off jödel of some distant Alpine peasant, reclaiming his

* "The blackcap has in common a full, sweet, deep, low, and wild pipe; yet that strain is of short continuance, and his motions are desultory. But when that bird sits calmly and engages in song in earnest, he pours forth very sweet but inward melody, and expresses great variety of soft and gentle modulations, superior to those of our warblers, the nightingale excepted."—WHITE'S "Selborne."

scattered flocks. In the garden amidst this beauty, a spring of water gushed out into a fountain from the hidden recesses of the earth, whilst a young child, graceful and lovely, who might have been the fairy of this enchanted land, flitted hither and thither, with a step as light and noiseless as a midsummer night's elf. But if the comparison is to hold good, then must fairies sometimes be naughty; for some such simple drama as the following would occasionally break in upon our quiet life:—

Approaching the avenue, this little fairy, "sunning over with curls," and beauty and laughter, but with a conscious look in her eyes, looks askance at mamma seated opposite. Her pinafore and frock are wet; shoes and socks likewise. Mamma looks up. Katie suddenly stands



QUAI NAPOLEON, GRENOBLE.

still, half defiant, half imploring. "Oh, Katie, disobedient again! You have been playing with the fountain." "I only wanted to wash my doll's face," say Katie, with a strong French accent, looking towards some one else for refuge. "But I have told you day after day you are *not* to play with the water," continues mamma. "But—I—wanted—to—wash—my—doll's—face," persists four-year-old Katie, with a wave of her hands and a shrug of her shoulders that would have done honour to a coquette of old French Cour life. The words are spoken with a deliberate emphasis, and the stress upon the first personal pronoun is marked. "Very well," replies mamma, rising quietly, and with a dignified emphasis equally marked; "but as Katie is disobedient she must be put to bed." Then suddenly there is a vision of graceful little legs and arms flying, and before it is possible to say Jack Robinson, somebody is in danger of strangling. A tiny pair of hands clasp themselves round the neck, and Katie clings, sobbing, as if for dear life. "Oh, Uncle Tarles! Uncle Tarles! *don't* let me be put to bed! *don't* let me

be put to bed !” But a relentless mamma with some difficulty unclaspeth the little hands (for every day Katie is warned, and every day transgresses), and a little sobbing figure is marched into the château. Mamma comes out again alone, and by-and-by I steal in on tiptoe. There, on a snowy couch, with lips parted and cheeks flushed, and hair splendidly rumped, reposes the small vision of beauty, sleeping the sleep of the innocent and the blessed.

CHARLES W. WOOD.



VOICES IN THE NIGHT.

A voice went wailing through the night :

“ Weep, for the year is dying, weep for the moments flying ;
With all thy force and might thou canst not stay their flight.
Weep, for the year is dying.”

The voice went moaning as in pain :

“ Weep for the misspent year, sing requiems o’er its bier ;
Thou canst not find again the scattered golden grain.
Weep—for the passing year.”

The voice sank sobbing in despair :

“ Weep for the tears you’ve shed, weep for the joys now fled ;
The hopes that promised fair, all melted into air.
Weep, for the year is *dead*.”

A voice went ringing through the night :

“ Rejoice, a year is born ! no longer weep and mourn ;
With glorious light and promise bright,
Shall burst the New Year’s dawn.”

On through the silent frosty night

Shrill rang the voice and clear : “ Fresh hopes, fresh joys are here ;
A tablet white on which to write,
Greet then the New-born Year !”—E. L.

BARBARA EARLE.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS crossing the bridge that sweet summer morning to visit little Elsie, the miller's ailing daughter, when I heard a voice below me on the river bank singing an old Yorkshire ditty. The clear tenor was very familiar to me; and, leaning over the side of the bridge, I saw the singer, George Renwick. By his side stood Barbara Earle, listening to the words of the sweet song yet trembling upon his lips. Her modest eyes were cast down, a tear hung glistening upon the silken lashes. Tears were rarer than smiles with happy Barbara, and the sight of that glittering drop gave me a sharp, uneasy sensation. What had George Renwick been teaching her during this my recent absence? Love was the burden of the young man's song; and the tableau was charming enough to tempt an artist's pencil, for it was one of the prettiest bits of landscape in all Yorkshire, the clear river winding, like a silver ribbon, between verdant banks. The water-lilies (spoiled beauties over their mirror) were nodding complacently to their reflected faces; a flock of birds came rising out of the woods beyond, soaring up with a cheerful twitter and the morning sunlight on their waving wings. But the fairest thing of all was Barbara Earle. Pretty Barbara Earle, the sweet Wild Rose of Olney!

Barbara was leaning against the rustic railing which ran down the river bank; her pretty hands filled with wild flowers, which she had plucked from the banks of the bubbling stream. Her hat hung by its strings from her unconscious arms: to judge by her face, she was not conscious of anything there, save one: that handsome cavalier who stood by her side. Barely sixteen, very slight and small, she looked even younger than her years; but in the depth of her rich brown eyes might be read feeling deep as a woman's. A smile played on her delicate mouth; thought sat on her broad, earnest brow. The wind might blow roughly upon that sweet face and the sunlight tan its delicate bloom; but neither wind nor sun could rob it of that higher loveliness which her pure life and her innocent soul had stamped there indelibly. It gave me a chill to see George Renwick with her thus. He was my cousin; but I knew that he was neither better nor worse than other idle and fashionable young men. Was he trifling with this pretty blossom? If he stooped to pluck the Wild Rose of Olney, would it be to wear it tenderly in his bosom for life? Or, alas, to cast it aside broken and faded, after it had ceased to

amuse the tedium of a passing hour? I knew him well, I say; and trembled for Barbara.

Do not misunderstand the fear. There was nothing vicious or depraved about the young man: he would not, as I believed, deliberately set himself out to injure a young girl, least of all, Barbara Earle; but he was the most incorrigible flirt that ever trifled with a lady's fan or breathed sentiment into a lady's ear. A sunny-tempered, genial fellow, with the head of Antinous, and the voice almost of an angel, who played with what hearts he chose, and—broke them. Sailing through life like a butterfly in a rose garden, sipping sweets from every fresh young blossom, and leaving naught in return—unless it was a sting. His foolish mother used to say that George was born to break hearts; and truly, if he were, he fulfilled his destiny with a grace, a polish, a perfection which were worthy a better cause. He went travelling after he quitted the University, and came back, long-haired, sentimental, bitten by Goethe; and with no end of locks of hair in his possession, mementoes of the hearts he had won. From Germany and France to Italy and Turkey went he; the Cape had seen him; Spanish America had held him: and he praised the last place most of all. Ah, what with orange-groves and guitars, dancing-girls and castanets, superb donnas with fire-flies in their dusky hair, George had reduced flirting to a science, long before pretty Barbara looked up in his face with her honest eyes, and believed him, with a blush, when he vowed he had never loved woman before. Poor, confiding child! What knew she of that dark-eyed Dolares, or that golden-haired Guadaloup, who had once enchained him? If he had reckoned his loves upon a chaplet (as the Bonzes reckon their prayers) the string of beads would have made her a substantial necklace—thrice around her pretty white neck and a few to boot. Would she believe me if I told her as much? Most probably not: and somehow I did not like to interfere. A caution I might give her when I got the opportunity, but no more.

So, after leaning over the old railing, watching the tableau below me, I turned away with a sigh and walked on. After what I had seen, the bridge was almost as hard to cross as that of the old woman in the nursery rhyme who tried to get home with her blackberries. My heart was full of pity for Barbara. So long as George Renwick played shuttlecock and battledore with hearts of his own calibre it mattered little; *that* was a game both parties understood. But Barbara's heart was no thing of cork and feathers; and *she* was no ordinary girl, though her lot was cast, for the present, in a very ordinary sphere. Born of an educated mother, a gentle, lady-like woman and clergyman's widow, she inherited a peculiar delicacy and refinement of feeling; of a deep, reticent nature, a wound of this kind would be sharply felt and very long in healing. As to persuading myself that George was in earnest

at last, the thing was out of the question : he would never make a *mésalliance*. Besides, he loved his unfettered life too well, and would be the last man in the world to hang the millstone round his neck with his own hands. Poor Barbara was no match for him. Though of gentle birth and reared with as many little refinements as Mrs. Earle's slender income would allow, Mr. George would no doubt see little, if any, difference between her and the village girls. Why, Elsie, the miller's daughter, was richer than Barbara.

"Heaven help you, my poor Barbara!" I said in my heart, as I came out of the green lane to the miller's garden; and found the sick Elsie sitting in the sun, with the wind stirring the flaxen hair about her shoulders. The patient little creature had her lap full of fresh flowers, which she was twining into garlands; and the very sight of her mild face was as soothing as oil upon troubled waters.

"Oh, Miss Nora!" she cried, and would have risen; but I stopped her.

"Who taught you to make these pretty wreaths, my lass?" said I, stroking her hair, and thinking of that other Elsie whom Longfellow's golden rhyme has made immortal.

"Barbara taught me, ma'am. Barbara and Mr. Renwick.

The young Elsie spoke without the harsh Yorkshire dialect; thanks perhaps to her associating with Barbara; something in the pleasant voice reminded me of Barbara's sweet tones. As I suspected, Mr. George had been making himself perfectly at home with these simple country-folk. As a near relative of our house, he was welcome everywhere. Apart from flirting, he knew how to win hearts. He had won this little one's with toys and trinkets.

I sat down on the grass by her chair; and, fanning myself slowly with my garden-hat, somehow or other, despite my vexation, I felt the peace of the summer morning sinking into my heart. How blue the bending sky was—flecked with its tiny, floating vapours; and how sad it was that, under such a true, faithful heaven, men like George Renwick (and their [name is legion] could act out their thoughtless follies, day after day, while earnest souls looked on in silence and felt themselves powerless!

The old mill was working close at hand with a merry clatter, a healthy activity in its very noise; the cheerful voices of the miller and his men came ringing into the quiet garden like the chorus of a rural opera. How peaceful it was! When I had rested and dreamed in the long grass until Elsie fell asleep among her flowers, I went into the miller's house and talked with the miller's wife about the dairy and the harvest and the prospect of rain; and, last of all, was led to look at a picture of Barbara on the whitewashed wall, which a travelling artist had done in water-colours for a night's lodging.

"But why did you not have Elsie taken instead of Barbara?"

"Elsie was too tired, ma'am. It was one of her worst evenings; and Miss Barbara chanced to be here."

It was a faithful sketch, with more merit than could be expected from an itinerant pencil and brush; and I was yet studying the graceful turn of the head, with its wavy hair, soft eyes, and tremulous mouth, when I heard George Renwick's voice in the garden. He was playing with Elsie, whom he had awakened with a shower of roses; and he came in presently, humming the "Miller's Daughter," and asked for a glass of milk. While the wife ran to get it for him, all alacrity and cheerfulness, as though he had been a prince, he talked to me in his easy way, and sat himself down in front of Barbara's picture. Something came up about the shooting season, and George remarked that he should not be here for it.

"Why not?" I asked.

"For the simple reason that I shall not be in England," he replied. "Vive l'Amerique! I cannot resist my destiny."

"Vive l'Amerique!" I repeated. "Are you going off to that Spanish America again?"

"Yes; it suits me."

"It! The life there, I suppose, you mean—your Donna Annas and Isabels." George laughed.

"And when do you go? In a month?"

"In a week, Nora; and less than that."

Well, it might be for the best. But—unconsciously my eyes wandered from his handsome face to the pictured one on the wall. His gaze followed mine.

"In sooth—

'She has a lovely face,
God in his mercy lend her grace,'"

he said, in a sweet, low voice.

"Lancelot broke Elaine's heart before he pitied her," added I, significantly.

"Did he?" returned he, as if thinking of something else. So cruel, so careless, when Barbara's happiness might be trembling in the balance!

"Oh, George, how unmanly you are!" The words broke from me as the miller's wife went into the garden to Elsie, leaving us alone. "What sort of a masquerade is this?"

He lifted his hat from one hand to another and smiled. He never did aught but smile, chide him as I would.

"Life is not a *bal masqué*," I went on vehemently, provoked at my own excitement, but unable to control it. "Nor can every peasant girl you flirt with forget—as *you* do——"

"Eloquent Nora!" he interrupted, approvingly. "You have not

only made me a Don Giovanni, but also found me my Zerlina. Where is Masetto?" And he began to whistle "*La ci darem*."

I was too indignant to utter another syllable. But George followed me out to the wicket, and took my hand in spite of me—took both my hands and held them with a grasp that made them ache long after.

"I know I am a sad fellow," he said, looking at me with his gay blue eyes; "but I am not as bad as you seem to think, Mrs. Monitor, with your wise twenty years. I have not done any harm."

"You have," I said, passionately. "You have gained a sweet girl's fresh young heart, and now you are going to leave her."

"Don't pout, *ma belle cousine*. Wish me *bon voyage*, and—pray for me."

He walked away with a laugh upon his lips. The next moment he was back again. His aspect changed to a tender earnestness.

"I *do* care for her," he whispered. "But, she is not of our degree, and what can come of it? My best course, the only one open to me, is to run away. In quitting you and her, I leave behind me all I hold dear."

"Don't attempt to talk sentiment to *me*, George. She is of our degree; quite sufficiently so. Her mother is a gentlewoman."

"Dear old lady! When I strolled into the cottage this morning with Barbara, she had her gown tucked up, shelling peas."

His half-mocking, half-light, and wholly pleasing manner had come back upon him. I was angry with myself for not being more angry with him. And he saw it.

"Nora, you were always given to heroics; but do just for a moment exercise your common sense. Is this little flower, half peasant, wholly rustic, fit to take her place in the world as Mrs. George Renwick? I wish she were, Heaven bless her!"

"But, George——"

"No more, Nora. My wife may not be as sweet as Barbara, but she must, at any rate, be a very different woman."

That was spoken emphatically enough, and the discussion was at an end for ever.

II.

Only a week later. Only one week. George had taken leave of all his friends, great and simple, and was gone. I had seen him leaning against the mill-door with folded arms, laughing and talking with the dusty miller; I had seen him lingering with Barbara in the glen, beside the stream. But that was yesterday, and this was to-day; and now I was pacing the green lanes and sunny fields, feeling very lonely; for George and his gay ways seemed to be strangely missed by us all.

Lured by the bright day and the pleasant mossy path, I lingered by the river, but did not cross the little bridge. The clock struck, as I

stood there, eleven ; and the sweet, silvery, far-away chime came sounding from the tower of Olney church. Turning to run down the slope to the glen, covered with buttercups and daisies, there in the midst of them sat Barbara, still as a statue ; her face, her whole attitude, full of more than dejection—of pain.

The rustle of my feet in the soft grass did not startle her ; and my hand was on her shoulder and my voice in her ear before she looked up and saw me. It frightened me then to see how very pale she was, and the anguish in her trembling lips and dark eyes. "Oh, my poor Barbara," I cried ; and the tender sympathy of my tone touched her to the quick, and she flung herself down at my feet in the purple clover, sobbing as if she would sob her life out. It passed as quickly as it had arisen—this violent gust of anguish ; and she rose up, facing me, with the great tears still upon her cheeks, but pale and quiet. A letter was in her hand ; and I began to have a glimmering of the truth. Not of the whole truth—oh, no—not of the whole cruel truth, the crushing sorrow which had come like a tornado on the blossoming of her young life.

She saw what I felt for her. In that desolate hour the poor child needed the sympathy of one older and stronger than herself.

"Will you read them, Miss Carstairs ?"

For it was two letters her shaking hands put into mine. Only one was in George's handwriting ; the other was from his great friend Burnham, and addressed to him.

"DEAR RENWICK,—Enclosed you will find your letter according to request. Fortunate thing I hadn't used it for a cigar-light. What the deuce did you want me to return it for ? For fear I should show it to the divine Augusta, and that the haughty beauty might take offence at your woodland nymph and discard you ? And so its name is Barbara—is it ! And it wears linsey-woolsey petticoats, and has red arms and big feet, I presume. Simplicity on a milking-stool ! Who would have thought the old bird would be caught with chaff ? The châteaux en Espagne were bad enough, and the donnas and hidalgos might have taught you a lesson ; but this Yorkshire lassie beats them hollow. However, should it come to wedding-cake and cards, present my congratulations to Mrs. George. But a truce to raillery. When are you coming up ?

"Yours, old fellow,

"HARRY BURNHAM."

There was no date to this precious epistle. I remembered Burnham perfectly well. A tall outré fellow, slender and curly-headed, who had taken honours at college, and was quite a celebrity the week we went up there. I could see him yet in my mind's eye, his long arms gesticulating like the sails of a windmill, and the gown hanging from his square shoulders as gracefully as it might have hung from a hat-rack.

But digesting this letter, and thinking of Burnham, I had forgotten the other letter, which I had dropped, and Barbara had picked up.

She had not forgotten it, however. Watching me silently with her large, patient eyes, and when I had taken it from her cold fingers, she folded her arms tightly over her breast, and stood looking out at the green woods, and the lilies, and the flashing river. George Renwick wrote a peculiar hand: I recognized it at a glance. It was written to Burnham, and dated from Olney some two or three weeks back. Running hastily over some unimportant details with which it opened, I came with a quicker heart-beat to this:—

“Burnham, my boy, in this humdrum, out-of-the-way Yorkshire settlement, that you are sometimes pleased to make merry at, I have lighted on the most charming little wild flower that ever England gave birth to. They call her the ‘Wild Rose of Olney,’ but the anemone would be more à propos. Sensitive, delicate, and pure as an angel, I tell you, Burnham, she would repay cultivation, if a fellow had a couple of centuries to spare, like the old patriarchs. But life is too short now-a-days; perhaps too fast, perhaps too artificial. I can but sip at this fresh little flower’s sweetness, like a wandering bee, and pass on again. I sing to her; I read poetry with her; the child really has refined tastes; I sit on the grass and talk with her by the hour together. Now and then a thought crosses me—but I drive it away again, for I cannot afford to train my wife. The woman I marry must be already trained; a queen of Society, like the grand Augusta. Commend me to her. As for this little Yorkshire beauty—her very name runs to poetry. Barbara Earle! Does it not rhyme to teeth of pearl? and clustering curl? and (as the yokels say here) precious gurl? Don’t blow me up—and, defend me from the muses! I have not another word for you, for I am off to seek my little wild flower. I shall miss her for at least a week after I get away from Olney. Thine,
“G. R.”

And *this* was the man who had held my hands in his not eight days before, and prayed “Heaven bless her!” with moist eyes. Such an earnestness in his tone, too; and such a manly tenderness in his face! Oh, Truth! Truth! lying at the bottom of the well, *you* may have looked up and seen the stars; but in this cruel darkness there was no starlight for this poor fragile Barbara.

My eyes met her face as I flung the letter on the grass. She looked heart-broken.

“But, Barbara, *surely* he was not heartless enough to leave you these letters to read!”

“I found them, Miss Carstairs. He came here for a minute again yesterday, on his way to the station. I—I—it was very wrong and foolish—but I buried my face in the grass when he was gone, and did

not look up until I heard the train passing. Then I saw a letter lying behind the tree stump; it must have fallen from his pocket."

"Oh, Barbara!" I said, "it was not honourable——"

She started forward with clasped hands, a painful flush burning in her cheeks. "Don't!"—it was almost a sob—"don't blame me! I know what you would say. It was not right to read what did not belong to me; but as true as that we are both standing here, Miss Nora, I thought it was a letter left for me by him—a written farewell. As I opened it, another letter fell out; and then I saw my own name; and—and I don't quite think I knew what I did."

"Barbara! Barbara!"

It was her mother's voice, calling home her "ae lamb"—calling her from the cottage door beyond the bridge on the hill-side.

"Yes, mother; I am coming. If I had not seen it in his own writing," she went on rapidly to me, "an angel from Heaven could not have made me believe it."

The tears were running down her half-averted cheeks, like rain.

"I have seen children play with a ball," she went on, nervously lacing and unlacing her slender fingers—"toss it here and toss it there, and then throw it over the wall altogether when they were tired of it. And that is how he has played with me. Oh, Miss Nora!" (and with her dilated eyes and firmly-set lips the girl looked ten years older) "if George Renwick ever asks mercy at my hands—and something seems to tell me that he *will*—may I remember this day! But it is killing me; it is killing me! Oh George, George!"

And it seemed that I had no comfort to give.

"If he had not done it so deliberately and heartlessly!" she sobbed. "How had I ever injured him, that he should make sport of me?"

"Barbara, child, this is at the best but a cruel theme; but I would say to you, do not, for your own sake, take up a worse notion of it than it deserves. I believe he is truly attached to you; but you know he is a man of fashion, moving in a high sphere; and his wife, when he shall marry, must be chosen in accordance with this. Ah, my dear, forgive him if you can, and try to put this unfortunate episode out of your life. Revenge is for the wicked; forgiveness for the meek!"

Her pretty head was bowed like a bending flower; her face had never shone with so holy a light as it did then. It was the first grand struggle between the good and evil angels of her life; and—thanks to Him who giveth the victory!—the good one conquered. All the hardness melted out of her face as she took my hand, and when she kissed it, I felt it wet with her tears.

"Barbara! Barbara!" cried her mother, more impatiently than before.

"Dear mother, I am coming. Yes, I will strive to put it out of my life," she said to me, the tears streaming down her cheeks. "But—

Miss Carstairs"—a vivid red flushing her face—"you will please to forget it, too."

"I will, Barbara."

"My mother must not suspect it. Or—or your people."

"No one shall know it or suspect it, Barbara. No one in the whole wide world. It is already an event of the past."

Drying her eyes, timidly giving a pressure to my hand, she hid the fatal letters in her bosom, and darted away to join her mother.

And so ended the heart's romance of Barbara Earle.

CHAPTER II.

SURE this three days' fête ; this fancy fair ; this magnificent entertainment, in which all devices of pleasure seem to have been ransacked to entertain its guests, had never had its compeer at Richmond. The benevolent nobleman, Lord Seanet, who had organised it in the cause of charity, had thrown open his house, on the banks of the Thames, and its magnificent grounds to all the world.

What it seemed to other people, I know not. To me it was fairy-land. Especially after my long, long exile abroad with my delicate mother, for whom England's climate had been pronounced too cold. Ten years had elapsed since the painful episode I have told of. Close upon that, in the same autumn, my mother's health failed ; she gave up the old home near Olney to the heir, her eldest son, and went abroad to a warmer place. It was ten years ago, I say ; ten years ! And, until now I had never been back in England.

Crowds were floating around me ; moving ever from one gorgeous scene to another ; from the motley entertainments within doors to the sylvan glades and green alleys without. Groups of beautiful women in laces, silks, muslins, glittering with jewels like a flower-bed with dew, jostled each other. To pass along in the throng was no easy matter. I had lost my friend who came with me, and with whom I was staying in town, and wanted to find her—Mrs. Knox.

Trying to take it coolly, and moving along as I best could, a lovely face flashed out of the swaying throng. A perfect face : notably sweet even among the galaxy of beauties which the cause of the sick and wounded had drawn together. And it reminded me of some face I had seen before. She was a young, elegant, well-dressed woman, whose manners were charmingly fascinating, perhaps because they were so modest and full of repose. But, gazing at her, I got involved in a jam. Mercy me ! was I going to be crushed to a pancake ?

I quite believe I should have been ; but, at a little cry I gave, this same lady stretched forth a helping hand and extricated me ; drawing me safely through a loop-hole in the crowd, at the risk of leaving my

drapery, like a hostage, on the other side. Ah! the relief it was to be a little quiet, and breathe pure air again! While I drew a deep breath and settled my plumage, like a ruffled pigeon, I was feasting my eyes on the fair face of my deliverer. Such a piquant, sparkling face, with its fine straight brows, telling of truth, its brown, soft, brilliant eyes, and its placid, delicate mouth. Neither pearl-powder nor rouge lay there: the delicate complexion, on which a fresh blush was ever dawning, needed it not. Who she was I knew not; but I enjoyed her fresh, pure, lovely face as we enjoy a fine picture.

"Oh, thank you," I said. "You have really done me a service. What a crowd it is!"

"Yes, indeed. And I hope we shall all buy largely to recompense Lord Seanet for his liberality and trouble. He wants to get five or six thousand pounds for the fund: and what is short he will supply himself."

Again, in the voice there seemed to be something not quite strange to me. It was low, gentle, earnest. I had rarely taken to anyone at first sight as I took to this woman.

"Why, Nora! I have been looking for you everywhere.—And you for me, I suppose! How do you do, Mrs. Trevelyan?"

Mrs. Knox, who was the speaker, held out her hand to the stranger, and introduced us: "Miss Carstairs, Mrs. Trevelyan."

"If this lady had not been kind enough to rescue me, I think I should have dropped down in sheer desperation, like the heathens before the car of Juggernaut, and let them trample me to death."

Some ladies came up, known apparently to both my companions, and said they were on their way to the art gallery. For, paintings and objects of art had been sent to Lord Seanet, lent, or as contributions for sale. We moved along with them.

"Who is Mrs. Trevelyan?" I asked of Mrs. Knox, drawing her aside as we walked.

"A rich widow, my dear, and a most charming, loveable woman."

"A widow! Why, she is quite young."

"Four or five-and-twenty, I should say. She has been a widow these two years, and is childless."

"Do you know of what county she is? She puts me so much in mind of some one or other that I must have seen before."

"Devonshire. Here we are."

The gallery was crowded—like every other place. If it had been cool, and we could have strolled leisurely from picture to picture, with our catalogues and our fans, I should have thoroughly enjoyed it; but we were not salamanders.

"This makes me sea-sick, *mon ami*," said I, with my handkerchief to my lips, and my hand on the shoulder of little Charley Knox.

"*That* might," said Mrs. Trevelyan, answering for the lad, and

pointing to a sea-view, with its lowering sky and green tumultuous waves. "A fine opportunity to 'suffer and be strong,'" she added, laughing.

But, when the face was not illuminated with either laugh or smile, a subdued expression pervaded its repose; as if the owner had known sadness. Turning from the sea-view, I caught the fine form, the handsome face of George Renwick—Captain Renwick now. Getting weary of his wanderings, he had entered the army, had gained some laurels abroad, and was now home again. It was ten years since he had held my hands in the sunshine amid the sweet summer stillness at the wicket of the miller's garden. Ten long, eventful years; and, until this summer, I had not seen him since. His letters to me were shy at first, because of the coolness and contempt apparent in mine; but now that he had come home after a ball in his breast and with the traces of suffering in his handsome face, my heart was melted. I had never seen him otherwise than in high health and spirits; and although I knew he deserved all he was suffering and much more, the contrast was so painful that I was heartily sorry for him. George was staying with Mrs. Knox since a week past; and, morning after morning, as he wound my silks, read Tennyson to me, or listened to my homilies with a half-languid smile, it grieved me to see what noble elements were lying fallow in him; elements which, with self-discipline and purer motives, would have made him, nay, would make him yet, a very king among his fellows.

George was staring at the paintings and water-colours on the walls, making remarks upon them to some friend who had entered with him. A tall, ungainly, plain man, whom I recognized almost directly for Harry Burnham. The sight of the two together brought back to my memory the past days, when George had stolen the heart of the Wild Rose of Olney, and had left those bitter letters behind him as a legacy. I sighed, as I always did when I thought of Barbara, and had nearly fallen into a reverie, when Mrs. Trevelyan's fan dropped out of her hand. She picked it up, and drew me towards a small picture in the corner—quite hidden, like a lesser light, in the glory of the surrounding art-treasures. The crowd seemed to overlook it, she remarked; and in truth it was but in an obscure place. I turned to it with her. I—why! what—what was this?—this exquisite picture? A young girl, a fair, childish girl, with glorious eyes and a face as pure as an angel's, was leaning against a rail by a river bank, eagerly reading a letter; another letter lay among the lilies, and the sunlight was turning the running water to gold. The colours were limpid and soft; the details well finished; but the face of the little maiden moved me more than all. Those clear brown eyes, the wave of the hair about the brow, the sweet fresh mouth! Memory had risen like a rushing stream, and overflowed its banks; and, borne on its tide, I was drifting once more through long-forgotten Yorkshire scenes. Once more I heard the clatter of the mill

and caught the cheery voices of the miller and his men ; once more I was standing in the glen, watching the light figure of Barbara dart away up the mossy slope and disappear in the shadow of the hill-side.

Mrs. Trevelyan was looking at me, with her lips slightly parted, an eager interest in her luminous eyes. An odd, tremulous something was fluttering in and out her face, like the flicker of fire-light on a statue when the night is falling. Paler than usual, and with that inexplicable expression in her eyes, I thought of Barbara. I almost said "Barbara !" with dry lips, as I bent towards her in the dense crowd. Light had flashed upon me like a revelation.

But she only whispered—"I am faint with the heat ;" and, dropping her mantle from her shoulders, gathered it—a shining mass of scarlet and white—upon her arm, as she passed to a painting styled "The Roll-call of the Last Victims"—which the reader will of course not confound with that picture called "The Roll-call," of later days. Almost at the same moment, George and Mr. Burnham came up to look at the same painting. That was their ostensible object ; their true one was to gaze at the beautiful woman, Mrs. Trevelyan.

"You are looking pale, Nora," he whispered to me. "What is it?"

Mrs. Trevelyan was gazing steadily at the foremost figure in the picture, the sadness of the despairing face seeming to be reflected on her own. Touching her on the arm, waiting for no permission, I introduced her to Captain Renwick. A movement of the crowd swayed me onwards ; and when I at length got back to them they were conversing together quietly upon indifferent topics.

"Shall we go to the fancy fair?" I asked. "It may be less crowded there."

"Yes," she answered, smiling. "I want to get rid of the money that is weighing down my pockets."

Ere the words had well left her lips, a tall, noble-looking man, of some two-and-thirty years, pushed his way through the crowd and took Mrs. Trevelyan on his arm as though he had a right to appropriate her. George looked daggers at him.

"Who the impudence is he?"

"It is Sir Charles St. Aubyn, member for R——," answered Burnham. "Report says that he is to marry Mrs. Trevelyan."

George looked after the queenly little head and the graceful figure, with the mass of scarlet and white trailing over its arm. The tall baronet was bending over her and talking earnestly.

"I wanted to ask a quiet question or two, Nora. Who is that lady? And where does she come from?"

"From Devonshire, I believe. She is Mrs. Trevelyan."

"Is that all you know of her?"

"Yes."

George's eyes chanced to fall just then upon the small picture that had so moved me. He stood gazing at it, never speaking, and came away with a strange look on his face.

We got into the fancy fair at last, George leaving me with Mrs. Knox. Burnham started up at the door, like an Indian out of ambush. The twain sauntered off together, and were lost in the crowd about the entrance of the Turkish Divan.

When our purses had been considerably lightened, and Captain Renwick and Burnham, having joined us, had been what they called "cleared out," we all strolled to the gipsy encampment, Mrs. Trevelyan side by side with me. Sir Charles had disappeared. Here Miss Augusta Hamilton, the "divine Augusta" of George's early devotion (now a setting star, brilliant even in its decline), was telling fortunes in the dim religious light of a tent; and, what with streaming hair and Oriental tints, she made a capital gipsy. Mrs. Trevelyan and the captain crossed her palm with silver, and she began to unravel the web of fate. To the lovely young widow she predicted a proposal from a cavalry officer before the June roses had faded; and to George, who was watching her with a half-mocking smile, she prophesied a coming letter, which would either make or mar his happiness.

But when the gipsy, guided by something more reliable than mere imagination, went on with quiet malice to unfold the history of George's many loves (as Leporello in the opera shakes out the long list of his master's sweethearts), the gallant captain did not seem to relish it, and would fain have bowed us out of the tent without much waste of ceremony. Harry Burnham laughed and shrugged his shoulders; but Mrs. Trevelyan glanced up at me from under her silky lashes with a look which was more sad than mirthful. Memory was busy with her.

Eating water-ices together, ten minutes later, I felt sick and chilly; and standing in the draught on the damp steps, waiting for the carriage to drive round, did not mend the matter. I caught a bad cold: this English climate is but a treacherous one, especially to those who have sojourned long under more genial skies.

II.

I had to lie in bed for a week; to keep the house for another week. Mrs. Knox, sister to my brother's wife at Olney, was very kind; but she would not let me run any risk. George had settled himself in club-chambers then, but came to Eaton Place often, and sent me up bouquets.

And Mrs. Trevelyan? She had made a *bonâ fide* conquest of one erring, elastic heart. The fowler who had snared so many birds was caught at last in the net of this woman, with the sweet voice, the sweeter face, and the true and pure heart. George had been haunting her these two weeks like a shadow. George Renwick loved at last.

The first time I saw them together after my illness was at a night fête at the Botanical Gardens: that fairyland of green and gold, with its wide-spreading plants, its broad walks, its water, its brilliant lights and its Eastern flowers.

The soft music of the band rose and fell, a soft light made the beautiful girls on every side look like fair bisque statues among the trees. It haunts me yet, like an Oriental dream. I was bending over a table, examining some curious specimens of coloured foliage, when I saw Captain Renwick come slowly round the margin of the basin with Mrs. Trevelyan on his arm. She might have been mistaken for the nymph of the lake from the spray of waxen flowers in her hair, the misty whiteness of her lace dress, and the brilliants which sparkled about her like drops of water. She had a bouquet of roses and heliotropes in her gloved hand, and, with her rich bloom and her bright, soft eyes, looked inexpressibly lovely.

They came slowly onwards, and she sat down on a rustic seat. The captain bent over her; and I'll venture to say he never rode up to possible death with a soberer face than he wore just then. He was talking hesitatingly, shyly, like a great school-boy, and with actually a bashful blush upon his bronzed cheek, blundering out something about his hopes and his heart.

Later on in the evening, I saw her alone. Her face was flushed; her hands were cold; her delicate lips were quivering with suppressed emotion. George came up to me, looking pale and tired, very subdued for him, and gave me his arm. I could not help asking what news he had had.

"None, as yet," was the brief answer. "She said she would give it me later—and sent me away."

But the answer came presently in the shape of a letter. Of all people, who should bring it but Burnham! "Mrs. Trevelyan asked me to give you this," said he, leaving it with George.

He opened the envelope; he *could not* wait to know his fate. Ah, never in all his life had George Renwick been so thoroughly in earnest. Out of it dropped two yellow letters, and a few words written in pencil:

"The enclosed are returned to Captain Renwick, with the regrets of
BARBARA EARLE TREVELYAN."

"What!" cried George Renwick, springing to his feet, and staring at the papers in his trembling hand. He was flushed to the very temples, more excited than I had ever seen him before, and he could not understand it all at once. His face took a deathly hue.

"Did you never suspect that she was Barbara Earle, George?"

"Never, so help me Heaven!" he gasped in a hoarse whisper. "It's true she reminded me of Barbara at times; but—how could I suspec
t

they were the same? The little simple village maiden grown into this most stately woman!" And, gathering the letters up in his hands, he rushed out of the gardens.

Mrs. Trevelyan saw him go, and came up.

"Did you not know me, Miss Carstairs?" she asked, gently laying her hand upon mine.

"Yes. I managed to find you out that day at Richmond. But the change is great: no wonder George Renwick did not."

"A very short while after you left Olney, my mother came into some property, and we went to live amid her relatives in Devonshire, close on the borders of Cornwall. She procured for me those advantages of education which her previous slender purse had denied. At twenty years of age I married Mr. Trevelyan, an old man, very rich. There you have my history. My poor mother is dead."

"And—shall you refuse him, Barbara?"

"Those letters were my refusal."

"You will not forgive?"

"It is not a question of forgiving. I forgave him long ago, but I have no love for him now. Love's fire, once raked out, can never be re-lighted. Heaven alone knows what his desertion cost me in those old days: sometimes I wonder that I lived through it."

"Then there's no hope for him?"

"None. I marry one who has my best and truest affection: Sir Charles St. Aubyn."

"Barbara, who painted that picture?"

"A poor travelling artist who came to Olney. I described to him how I should like it taken."

"The carriage has been waiting for hours, Nora."

I rose at Mrs. Knox's summons, shaking hands with Barbara. "We can still be friends—can we not, Barbara?" I whispered.

"Friends, yes: with you and with him too," she answered, with a warm pressure and her sweet smile. "I am willing to forget if he is."

George was lingering in the crowd outside the gate and saw us. He put my arm within his. "This has been a blow to-night, Nora. I hears he marries that St. Aubyn."

"Yes, a blow; you gave her one once, you know. She would like to forget and forgive, and to be friends with us in future."

"I wonder whether *you* would have me, Nora?"

"Go along, George, and don't talk nonsense."

But I am not quite sure that it will turn out to be altogether nonsense in the future. Meanwhile, I am the nearest and dearest friend of Lady St. Aubyn—as I was once the early friend of sweet little Barbara Earle.

PAGANINI.

TOWARDS the afternoon of a hot July day in the early part of this century there rattled through the streets of Ferrara a post-carriage, drawn by four horses. It drew up before the principal hotel in the place. The postilion sprang to the ground, and threw coverings over his smoking cattle. A waiter hurried out and opened the carriage door. An excited Englishman came forth from under a mountain of rugs, and, seizing hold of the man by the arm, exclaimed: "Is he here still? Is it too late? Are we in time?"

The startled waiter stammered "Who here? Whom do you seek, Milord?" A young lady, who stepped out of the carriage after the gentleman, came to his aid, crying, in enthusiastic tones, "Ah! My father means the great Paganini, who was to have given a concert here to-day. Is he still in the town? And does he really play to-day?"

"At your service, Signora," answered the relieved waiter. "All Ferrara is in an uproar, for he has promised a concert for this evening."

The Englishman drew a handful of money out of his pocket; threw the postilion a splendid reward for his hot and hasty journey, and giving the waiter some gold pieces, and orders to buy tickets for himself and his daughter for the evening's entertainment, he ascended the hotel steps, followed by the young lady; piles of luggage being borne up after them.

The name of Paganini was at that time a household word in Italy. The fame of this man as a wonderful musician had spread with amazing rapidity. He was born at Genoa, on the nineteenth of February, in the year 1784. It is said that his mother foresaw his future renown in a vision. In his sixth year, the boy played violin solos in the church, and, when nine years old, he stepped on the boards of a theatre for the first time. His principal teacher was Allesandro Stella, of Parma, but he was also taught by Ghiretti, and others. When but thirteen years old he made an artistic tour through Lombardy; and, at fourteen, he gave concerts on his own account. At twenty, he stood on the pinnacle of fame as a violin player; but, from that time forward, except when he made his triumphal journeys through Europe, his life was very much veiled in mystery, as regards the outer world. He continually disappeared for months together, leaving no trace or clue by which his whereabouts could be discovered, and then, again, as suddenly as he had vanished, he would reappear; now here, now there, but always where he was least expected: and, before again hiding himself, would give a few concerts—three, or, at the most, four.

There were, of course, various theories afloat as to his private history. Many of his admirers warmly upheld it as their opinion that he was in reality an angel sent down to this world, in pity, for the purpose of lightening the miseries of earthly life by giving man a foretaste of what the heavenly harmonies will be hereafter. They said, with truth, that it was as if a choir of sweet-voiced spirits lay hid within the instrument, and that, at times, it seemed as though this choir turned into a grand orchestra. In further support of this opinion, they said that Paganini lived on air, or, at most, a little herb-tea. On the other hand, his detractors hinted that his private life was a most ill-regulated one, and that, far from living upon air, he ate in a ravenous and almost brutal manner, although he at times chastised himself with long fastings, by which he had ruined his health.

Paganini's detractors further stated that he despised all forms of religion, and never put his foot upon consecrated ground. Some declared that he had a league with Satan, and held interviews with him in an old Florentine castle, much frequented by the artist, from which, they said, fearful sounds were heard proceeding on stormy nights, and where the great master was known to have lain as one dead, for hours together, on different occasions. These persons believed that at such times Paganini had only come back to life by magical agency. In all probability what gave rise to this latter story is the fact that Paganini destroyed his health and nervous system by continual use of Leroy's so-called life elixir. He was, at any rate, credited liberally by some with dealings in the black art. His glance was said to be irresistible, and to partake of some of the qualities ascribed to the evil eye. A flower girl told how she had met him one day in a lonely neighbourhood, and had remained standing still as one fascinated—as a bird is petrified by the gaze of a serpent—while he paced up and down before her, declaiming loudly; and bursting into fits of demoniacal laughter. Another swore to having seen a tall dark shadow bending over him at one of his concerts, and directing his hand; while a third testified that he had seen nine or ten shadowy hands hovering about the strings of the great master's violin.

But all these rumours only increased the fame and attractions of this wonderful man. When it became known that he was about to give a concert at Ferrara, visitors streamed thither from all directions, consumed with feverish impatience to accomplish their various journeys; half dreading lest, on their arrival, they should learn that the man they sought had again disappeared. Amongst the rest came the pair of English travellers, with the scene of whose arrival this sketch opened. They rested but for a few hours, and then hastened early to the theatre, in order to secure their places. The house was, of course, thronged; but the expectant audience was at first bitterly disappointed. A favourite singer had promised Paganini her aid in

the evening's performance ; but, at the last moment, had left him shamefully in the lurch. To fill the gap caused by her absence, the violinist had engaged a young dancer, who had a tolerable voice, and undertook to sing a few light pieces at the beginning of the entertainment. The more she endeavoured to give satisfaction, however, the more the disappointed public hissed and hooted her down, until at last, in despair, the girl ran away, and took refuge behind the curtain.

As soon as she disappeared a breathless silence fell upon the whole house. The audience waited, with strained nerves, for the master's appearance, prepared to give him an enthusiastic reception. But some evil fortune seemed to pursue the spoiled favourite on this particular evening. Like some shadow out of the demon world, a lean, gaunt, haggard figure slipped from behind the curtain. All held their breath. His strange appearance was familiar to his admirers ; the wan thin face, with pale cheeks, framed in long black hair hanging wildly about ; the features, continually twisted into some grimace ; the sharp hooked nose ; the dull, lurking, half-quenched glow in the eyes, buried under dark brows ; the unsteady gait, as though the man were weak and powerless, and might, at any moment, bend or break in two like some tender reed ; the strange scornful smile, hovering constantly about the ill-tutored lips ;—for all this they were prepared ; his picture hung in every shop and public place. They in a manner revered his peculiarities ; viewing them with a sort of shudder of half pity, half horror ; but, to-day, an additional and unexpected peculiarity distinguished him. He had wounded his foot with a nail in Livorno, from whence he had come ; and, in place of gliding to his place like a ghost, as usual, he hobbled awkwardly across to his desk. The ludicrous appearance he made proved irresistible. In place of the storm of applause that usually greeted him, he was met by smothered, and then immoderate, bursts of laughter. The most enthusiastic of those present endeavoured to drown the ridicule by loud cheering, and finding this impossible fell into extravagant anger—our two English visitors being amongst the most angry—until the uproar became tremendous, and promised to be endless.

On a sudden, however, all again grew hushed into silence, as though influenced by the moving of a magic wand : as, indeed, they were.

By a violent effort Paganini composed himself, and grasped his violin. The frail, wavering figure straightened itself and became imposing. Every muscle was strained to its utmost tension. His eyes shone like stars of glowing fire. As though made of brass, his nervous fingers clenched his instrument, while the bow in his other hand moved like a powerful sword over the strings, drawing from them a tone so soft, so ethereal, so ravishing, and withal so sharp and clear, that it is hard to describe the listeners' sensations otherwise.

than by the term, an agony of pleasure ; for all their diverse feelings were comprised in this.

This keen, heart-stirring tone hovered in the air like a clear, trembling star for a little space of time, and then the powerful fingers moved, the bow flashed up and down like lightning over the strings. It was as if that first keen tone had distilled itself into a rain of soft, refreshing notes ; as though the star had burst, and fallen to the ground in beautiful fragments. Paganini kept his audience entranced from that moment. Melting passages, in which harp-like tones blended, were exchanged for full sounds as of a mighty host of instruments, in which the waves of melody roared and jostled against each other in their exuberance. All eyes were drawn, as by a magnet, to the wonderful player. No sound came through the whole house to disturb the attention of the audience ; except, now and then, that of a hysterical, smothered sob, which gave evidence of some overstrained and excited nerves.

When the music had ceased those present still sat on, as if under an enchanted tree, silent and scarcely breathing ; but when Paganini bowed, with a malicious smile curling up his lips, the enthusiasm of delight manifested knew no limits. It was as if an earthquake shook the house. The musician had nobly revenged himself upon the public, and had forced them to admire in place of ridiculing him. But his soul hankered after a revenge of a different sort. He hobbled to the very front of the platform, with his violin still in his hand. He lifted his bow and stooped to begin afresh.

Breathless stillness, as before. From the magical instrument there suddenly burst out a perfect simulation of a donkey's bray : " E—ah ! E—ah ! " No ass in the country could have done it better. Everyone looked at everyone else in horrified surprise. The musician bowed again, and, with his cynical smile still on his lips, said " This for those who hissed before, and laughed ! "

The result was electrical. The enthusiasts applauded, clapped, and laughed, but the greater number of those present burst into a storm of wrath, filling the air with abusive epithets. The Ferrarese in the house took the joke as specially personal to them, as it was very much the custom of the surrounding aristocracy to nickname the city-folk asses, and to greet them with " E—ahs," when it was their pleasure to insult them.

Long after Paganini had taken refuge in his hotel, and had locked himself up from all the world, as was his custom, the storm he had raised still raged within the theatre. The police had at last to interfere between the two parties. With wounded bodies, and torn clothes, the greater number of those present left the building ; watches, chains, and all other ornaments having, in most cases, disappeared totally. Lord M—— and his daughter were of course amongst those whose

admiration and reverence for the great master had only been increased by the night's occurrences. Amongst all his enthusiastic followers, they were, perhaps, the very warmest and most devoted.

At the table d'hôte next day, the conversation naturally turned entirely on the previous evening's entertainment. The greater number of voices were united in condemning the musician for his joke, and in criticising his whole character and behaviour severely. Lord M—— observed that a middle-aged gentlemen sitting opposite to him seemed continually about to take part in the conversation, but as often checked himself with a visible effort. At last, when some very censorious remarks were made on Paganini, he burst out into vehement defence, as though he were well acquainted with everything concerning the musician's private life. His whole air and manner was that of one who says to himself inwardly, "If you all knew what I know, you would not talk so foolishly."

When dinner was over, Lord M—— succeeded in establishing an acquaintance with this gentleman; and, during subsequent intercourse, he was induced to confide many interesting particulars concerning Paganini to the nobleman and Lady Arabella.

He told how he had first made acquaintance with the genius. He was at a wedding one day in Florence, and, in the evening, he and the other guests were amusing themselves with jests and laughter on the banks of the Arno. Music and song also beguiled the time, and he was sitting down, playing on a guitar to a circle of admiring listeners, when on a sudden, with a cry of affright, the little company started aside, surprised at the appearance of a tall, pale man, with black dishevelled hair flying about him, and with wild, gleaming eyes. This strange figure strode up to the player, took the instrument from his astonished hand, and began to play in his turn, gesticulating excitedly the while. The music he brought forth seemed to those who listened perfectly divine; but with a harsh chord he suddenly broke off, and, as if in an access of rage, dashed the guitar to pieces against a tree, and then disappeared as quickly as he had appeared, and as unexpectedly.

The following day the wedding guests learned that their strange entertainer was Paganini, whom the Grand Duchess had bidden to the Court to give a concert. It may be imagined how carefully the teller of the tale treasured up the broken fragments of the guitar. He was as much surprised as pleased a few days later, when the great master came to him with an apology for the odd jest he had played, and offering a liberal recompense for the harm done. This latter was naturally refused; but a friendship between the two, thus strangely brought together, was the result of the interview. They travelled about continually in company, and the musician had received trusty service from Lord M——'s new acquaintance, and had given him his fullest confidence. This latter entreated the nobleman and his daughter

not to give credence to the many tales circulated to the disadvantage and discredit of his friend. Knowing that he spoke to trustworthy ears and sympathising hearts, he confided to them the true secret of the great master's strongly developed peculiarities and misanthropy.

While at the Florentine Court, a certain noble lady had conceived for him a violent passion, which caused him much discomfort. It was entirely and exclusively on her side, his heart being given to a lovely young girl, the daughter of a rich merchant in the city. She was also much attached to him. Unfortunately, she betrayed her feelings one evening at one of Paganini's concerts. During an effective pause made by him in playing, she heaved a deep sigh. Tears streamed from her eyes, and she was near fainting. Her lover betrayed uneasiness concerning her; and went to the front of the boards, looking towards where she sat. Everyone saw the two exchange glances.

Suddenly a strange gentleman made his way to the young girl's side, took her hand, and whispered some words into her ear. She grew deadly pale, but allowed him to lead her away. A few curious persons crept out after the pair, and saw them driving quickly away in a black carriage. Whither they went is unknown, but the girl was seen no more in Florence. Nearly everyone laid the blame of her disappearance on Paganini. Two of the girl's relations challenged him on her account. He stabbed them both, one after the other. Later, he also disappeared mysteriously for a very lengthened period. His friend vowed never to rest until he had found him out; and at last, after three years' searching, he discovered him imprisoned in a castle in Tuscany belonging to some relatives of the lost girl. He was confined in a gloomy dungeon; his only furniture a broken table, an old chair, a miserable bed, and a water jug; his only solace some writing materials, which he had made use of in putting on paper many musical compositions, and his beloved violin, of which, however, every string but one had, by degrees, become useless. Nevertheless, he contrived still to play on this one string, so as to delight his own heart, and the hearts of all who listened to him. His jailors were so much attached to him that it was with their connivance that his friend succeeded in releasing him from his sad captivity.

Lord M—— and Lady Arabella so entreated of their new acquaintance to get them a personal interview with Paganini, that at last he did what he could to please them by introducing them secretly into a garden where he knew his friend was, and whence he could not easily escape. It was late in the evening, and was growing dusk, but they could see the musician listlessly stretched at full length upon the grass, with his back turned to them.

At some slight noise, however, which betrayed their presence, he started hastily up, drew the loose cloak he wore over his face, and with one bound disappeared from their sight into a sheltering grove of trees.



M. ELLEN EDWARDS

J. SWAIN.

IN THE BALL-ROOM.